NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PLATONIC DIALECTIC

A PHILOSOPHY OF INQUIRY

Edited by
Jens Kristian Larsen, Vivil Valvik Haraldsen,
and Justin Vlasits

ROUTLEDGE

New Perspectives on Platonic Dialectic

For Plato, philosophy depends on, or is perhaps even identical with, dialectic. Few will dispute this claim, but there is little agreement as to what Platonic dialectic is. According to a now prevailing view it is a method for inquiry the conception of which changed so radically for Plato that it "had a strong tendency … to mean 'the ideal method', whatever that may be" (Richard Robinson). Most studies of Platonic dialectic accordingly focus on only one aspect of this method that allegedly characterizes one specific period in Plato's development.

This volume offers fresh perspectives on Platonic dialectic. Its 13 chapters present a comprehensive picture of this crucial aspect of Plato's philosophy and seek to clarify what Plato takes to be proper dialectical procedures. They examine the ways in which these procedures are related to each other and other aspects of his philosophy, such as ethics, psychology, and metaphysics. Collectively, the chapters challenge the now prevailing understanding of Plato's ideal of method.

New Perspectives on Platonic Dialectic will appeal to scholars and advanced students interested in Plato, ancient philosophy, philosophical method, and the history of logic.

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Introduction

New Perspectives on Platonic Dialectic

Jens Kristian Larsen, Vivil Valvik Haraldsen, and Justin Vlasits

SOCRATES: … it is clear to me even from what he has said that Polus has practiced what is called rhetoric rather than conversing.
POLUS: How so, Socrates?
SOCRATES: Because, Polus, when Chaerephon asks of what art Gorgias is a knower, you extol his art as if someone were blaming it, but you did not answer what it is.
Gorgias 448d–e

(translation by J. H. Nichols Jr)

SOCRATES: I myself… am a lover of these divisions and collections, so that I may be capable of speaking and thinking. And if I consider someone else to have the power to see the things that have naturally grown into one and toward many, I pursue this man "behind after his footstep, as if a god's." Furthermore, those who are able to do this—whether I address them correctly or not, god knows, but however that may be, so far I call them dialectical.
Phaedrus 266b–c

(translation by J. H. Nichols Jr)

Platonic Dialectic and the Love of Wisdom

For Plato, philosophy—literally the love of wisdom—is developed through conversation.[1] Human beings can only attain what wisdom they may achieve through inquiry set in motion by the recognition that one lacks wisdom (*Ap*. 29b; *Sph*. 230a; *Smp*. 204a; *Alc*. *1* 118e; *Men*. 84a–c), and one is likely to recognize the fact that one lacks wisdom only if one begins to test one's opinions about important matters, usually in conversation with someone else. The inquiry this recognition may initiate, Plato further urges, is also best carried out through conversation—with others or with oneself. This is because conversation, according to Plato, helps to ensure that each proposition used in an inquiry is sufficiently clarified

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and distinguished (*Men.* 75c–e; *Phdr.* 237b–c, 265d; *Grg.* 453b–c) and carefully considered before being accepted or rejected (*Tht.* 154d–e with 189e–190a; see also Nettleship 1901, 280; Shorey 1935, 200–1n6). Furthermore, conversation seems to be an ideal vehicle for inquiry in so far as it is especially apt at allowing one, in the course of an inquiry, to reconsider and reject a proposition accepted at an earlier point if it turns out that what follows from it is unacceptable; an inquiry through conversation is thus especially suitable for leaving open the possibility that one may return to its beginning and start over again (*Prt.* 333d; *Phd.* 105b; *Tht.* 200d).

If conversation is to fulfil its role in inquiry, however, it must be pursued correctly. Testing one's beliefs is important for inquiry—but only if the test is genuine and does not, for example, merely appeal to popular sentiments (*Grg.* 471e–472d). Clarifications and distinctions are also helpful—but only to the extent that they are made with attention to the subject matter of the inquiry rather than based on mere verbal quibbles (see *R.* 454a, 535b–c; *Plt.* 262c–263a). To be able to investigate what follows from accepting a given proposition is crucial—but in order to do so, one must focus on one proposition at a time and figure out what follows from it before turning to another proposition (*Phd.* 101d–102a). In short, one must follow certain procedures if conversation is to become a proper vehicle for philosophical inquiry. If one does not, conversation stands in constant danger of degenerating into mere verbal contradiction and quarreling (*R.* 454a–b; *Phlb.* 15d–17a). Plato's main interlocutors call the procedures one must follow, and those who master them, dialectical (*Men.* 75d; *R.* 537c; *Crat.* 390c; *Phlb.* 17a; *Soph.* 253e; *Phdr.* 266c) and at various places identify a science or an art to which such procedures belong through the term "διαλεκτική" (*R.* 533c, 534e; *Phdr.* 276e; *Sph.* 253d), that is, the "science of conversation," a conversation carried out through question and answer (*Cra.* 390c–d, 398c–d; see also *Tht.* 161e; *Phd.* 75d, 78d, *R.* 534d), aimed at giving an account of something (*Prt.* 336c; *Phdr* 277c; *Sph.* 218b–c; *R.* 534b).[2]

Possession of this science is characteristic of philosophers and is part of what distinguishes them from sophists and professional quarrelers, who can otherwise be easily confused with philosophers. There can be little doubt, then, that dialectic and the procedures associated with it are central to Plato's conception of philosophy. One modern scholar even suggests that dialectic is the "technical heartland of Platonic philosophy" (Kahn 1996, 292; see also Robinson 1953, 71).[3] But while everyone will agree that dialectic is important to Plato, there is little agreement when it comes to its nature.

The aim of this volume is to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Platonic dialectic. The chapters seek to clarify what Plato takes to be proper dialectical procedures as well as examine the ways in

which these procedures are related to each other and other aspects of his philosophy, such as ethics, psychology, and metaphysics.

Two Approaches to Platonic Dialectic

Ancient Platonists, who assumed that Plato's conception of philosophy remained the same throughout his writings, tended accordingly to regard the procedures identified as dialectical in Plato's corpus as different aspects of a coherent whole. Alcinous states that Platonic dialectic as such is aimed at examining "the essence of everything whatsoever" and that it comprises "the procedures of division, definition, analysis, and in addition induction and syllogistic" (*Intr.* 5.1; translation by John Dillon). Plotinus, when presenting his account of dialectic, relies on passages from the *Republic* as readily as passages from the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist* and describes dialectic as a single science able to, among other things, contemplate real being, converse about the good, and say what each thing is, how it differs from other things, and what it has in common with other things (*Enn.* I.3.4). Proclus takes for granted that what is described as dialectic in Plato's other dialogues may reasonably be compared as a whole with what Parmenides describes as dialectic in the dialogue named after him (*in Prm.* 648–58).[4]

It appears that the idea that Platonic dialectic was one more or less coherent discipline or procedure, different aspects of which could be elicited from various dialogues, remained the predominant view until developmental approaches to the study of philosophical authors became popular in the latter part of the 19th century. Pierre Gassendi thus remarks in his posthumously published *Syntagma Philosophicum* (first published in 1658) that, while Plato "composed no particular work that survives, which could be called 'Dialectic'…" he "nevertheless … commended dialectic often and explained what its goal [*scopus*] is as well as what its functions [*munera*] would be" (Gassendi 1658, 42, translation by Justin Vlasits). He proceeds to reconstruct a Platonic "logic" on the basis of passages in the *Republic*, *Sophist*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedo, Theaetetus*, and *Cratylus*. Gassendi also critically discusses the approaches to Platonic dialectic from Diogenes Laërtius and late ancient Platonists like Alcinous, Apuleius, and Plotinus. Although there are many differences, the syncretism we see in Gassendi and the Platonists does not differ significantly from that of, e.g., the 19th-century historian of logic Carl Prantl (1855).

Modern scholars writing after the advent of developmental studies, however, have tended to regard the procedures described as dialectical in the dialogues as distinct methodologies belonging to various groups of dialogues associated with supposed developments in Plato's thought.[5] In his *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* Richard Robinson thus famously suggested that dialectic "had a strong tendency in Plato to mean 'the ideal

method', *whatever that may be*" and that the word was first and foremost an "honorific title." This "usage," he further urged, "combined with the fact that Plato did at one time considerably change his conception of the best method," namely when he introduced the supposedly new method of collection and division in the later dialogues, means that "the meaning of the word 'dialectic' undergoes a substantial alteration in the course of the dialogues" (1953, 70). Many scholars active during the second half of the 20th century, a majority of whom have approached Plato through the perspective of developmentalism, have followed him in this assessment. In fact, Robinson's interpretation of Platonic dialectic both depended on, and helped reinforce, the developmental approach to Plato.

This is not the place to assess in detail the developmentalist thesis relative to every aspect of Plato's philosophy. For present purposes, it is enough to sketch the implications it has had for the study of Platonic dialectic. Broadly speaking, the approach rests on the assumption that one may isolate, on the basis of various testimonia about Socrates from authors such as Xenophon and Aristotle, an early group of Platonic dialogues that more or less accurately reflect the views of the historical Socrates; that Plato later, in his "constructive" period and through the so-called middle period dialogues, developed and expounded a metaphysical system revolving around the assumption of transcendent forms and the immortality of the soul; and that he finally, in his late period dialogues, began to examine critically the assumptions underlying his supposedly middle period metaphysics. What Robinson added to this general picture was a specific account of the development of Plato's conception of method.

Building in part on earlier work carried out by Julius Stenzel (especially Stenzel 1917; see Robinson 1941a, 6 and 1941b), Robinson suggested that the three periods of dialogues recognized by developmentalist scholars were also set apart from each other by the fact that different ideals of method predominated. The use, if not the theoretical discussion of, the method of *elenchus*, as he called it, was especially characteristic of the early or Socratic dialogues and reflected an essentially destructive dialectical procedure of the historical Socrates (1953, 18–19). The method of hypothesis was prominent only in the middle period dialogues (1953, 70, 93). Finally, the method of division and synthesis (or collection and division, as it is now commonly called) characterized the late period (1953, 52, 70), a view Robinson inherited from Stenzel. Moreover, Robinson argued that it was only in the middle- and late period dialogues that Plato developed a full notion of dialectic (1953, v, 89), even if that notion had its basis in the practice of the historical Socrates that Plato's early dialogues depicted. Robinson himself did not claim that these methods were entirely exclusive to one period (1953, v)—he held, for instance, that *elenchus* was also used in the supposedly middle- and late period dialogues, although it was now employed for constructive and not merely destructive purposes (1953, 83–4). Furthermore, he emphasized

that various features, in particular the search for definitions of essences (1953, 70–1), remained central to Plato's overall conception of dialectic. But Robinson insisted that the use of collection and division to arrive at essential definitions was characteristic of Plato's late dialogues only (1953, 70) and that hypothesis as a methodical element of dialectic was "prominent only in the middle dialogues" (1953, 93).

Such an approach to Platonic dialectic was criticized early on by scholars skeptical of the more extreme implications of the general developmental approach to Plato such as Paul Friedländer and Paul Shorey. They emphasized that collection and division was found also in dialogues supposedly earlier than those considered late (Shorey 1903, 50–2; 1933, 295; Friedländer 1964, 337n9; 1960, 444n35, 472n13),[6] and pointed out that the so-called *elenchus* was employed by Socrates in much the same manner as in the supposedly early dialogues also in e.g. the *Theaetetus* (Friedländer 1945; a fact already recognized by Robinson). But in the heyday of developmentalism, such objections generally went unheeded.

The general developmental approach to Plato presupposed by Stenzel and Robinson is now questioned by a growing number of scholars;[7] but it is nevertheless fair to say that the framework for interpreting Platonic dialectic introduced by Stenzel and Robinson, in particular with their sharp distinction between *elenchus*, hypothesis, and division as methods for inquiry and the tendency to focus exclusively on these when discussing Platonic dialectic, remains unquestioned in the majority of contemporary work on Platonic dialectic and is often still tacitly assumed (see e.g. Notomi 1999; Benson 2000; Rickless 2006; Crivelli 2011).

The fact that developmentalism rests on less secure ground than was previously supposed, however, when considered in conjunction with the additional fact that several prominent figures in a tradition of interpretation stretching for more than 2000 years were of the conviction that Plato had a more or less unified conception of dialectic, recommends exploring an approach to Platonic dialectic liberated from the narrow constraints of developmentalism. This anthology aims to provide examples of such explorations that may also, it is hoped, facilitate fruitful future research into Platonic dialectic.

Problems with Developmentalism in Regard to Dialectic

A premise fundamental to the anthology is that the complacent developmentalism found in today's study of Platonic dialectic needs to be rethought. In this introduction we do not aim to propose a new paradigm to replace it—the contributors to the volume share no such paradigm. Rather, we attempt to clear the ground for a reconceptualization of dialectic in the Platonic corpus. We argue for three related claims, and to do so, we will grant, for the sake of this argument, the rough outlines of the chronology assumed since Stenzel and Robinson (even

though we ourselves take this chronology to be less secure than is often thought). First, the methods commonly assigned by modern scholars to one or another period (*elenchus*, hypothesis, collection and division) in fact appear also in dialogues commonly assigned to other periods, sometimes even under precisely the same description as in dialogues belonging to their "standard" periods.[8] Second, beyond these formal methodical similarities, there are strong parallels, down to the linguistic level, in what subject matters these methods are applied to across dialogues from different periods. Finally, the general characterizations of dialectic found in these supposed periods are not incompatible and may even suggest that procedures other than those targeted by developmentalist scholars are central to dialectic. Taken together, these things show that the developmentalist account of the theory and practice of Platonic dialectic does not do justice to its unity and variety.

Formal Similarities between Dialectical Procedures in Dialogues from Supposedly Different Periods

Remarkably, *elenchos*, which many scholars take to be a specifically Socratic method, is, with the possible exception of the *Gorgias* (471e–472d), most explicitly theorized in the supposedly late *Sophist*:

> VISITOR: So let it be expertise in cleansing, belonging to discriminative expertise, and let the part of cleansing that has to do with soul be marked off from other parts; of this, expertise in teaching; of teaching, expertise in education; and of educative expertise, let the testing (ἔλεγχος) that takes place in relation to empty opinion about one's own wisdom, in the account that came up just now, be said to be nothing other for us than a sophistry ennobled by kinship.
>
> (231b2–8, translation by Christopher Rowe, modified)[9]

This is, it may be argued, the most direct account of ἔλεγχος found in Plato, and it plays a central part in the account of the so-called constructive use of the "*elenchus*" we find in Robinson.[10] For the time being, we can set *elenchos* aside, however, since it is generally acknowledged to play a role in dialogues belonging to all periods,[11] even if many scholars will argue that it is most prominent in the supposedly early dialogues, and some scholars, following Robinson, will tend to distinguish a negative use, found in these dialogues, from a more constructive use found in supposedly later dialogues.

Hypothesis, by contrast, the supposed methodological innovation of the middle period, is commonly claimed to be introduced first in the *Meno*, a dialogue regarded by many as transitional, and to be developed in detail only afterward in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*; according to Robinson, it was properly characteristic only of the supposedly

middle period dialogues (1953, 70), a claim that many scholars have accepted. There are good reasons to question both claims.

According to most developmental accounts of Plato's dialogues, the *Protagoras* dates squarely in the early period, given Socrates' interlocutors, who in contrast to the interlocutors in e.g. the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, do not belong to Socrates' "inner circle," and given the appearance of what many scholars think of as his signature ethical doctrines (for instance, his apparent denial of the possibility of weakness of will in the *Protagoras*). So let us begin there. Toward the end of the dialogue, where the main question is whether virtue can be taught, Socrates sums up their inquiry as follows:

> SOCRATES: Now, Protagoras hypothesized (ὑποθέμενος) at first that it [virtue] could be taught, but now he thinks the opposite, urging that hardly any of the virtues turn out to be knowledge.
>
> (361b7–c1, translation by Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell)

"ὑποτίθημι" is no uncommon word in Greek prose as such, and a critic might object that the mere fact that Socrates uses it does not prove that the dialogue employs hypothesis the way dialogues such as the *Meno* and *Phaedo* do. This objection is rendered less plausible, however, by the fact that the context in which Socrates uses the expression closely parallels the context in which Plato supposedly first introduces hypothesis in the *Meno*. The guiding question of the two dialogues is the same—is virtue teachable?—and in the *Protagoras* Socrates presents the same objection to an affirmative answer as he does in the *Meno*: the *kaloi k'agathoi* do not teach their children virtue (*Men.* 93a–94e, *Prt.* 319e–20b). It seems, then, that we here have at least one instance of a deliberate use of the method of hypothesis that, on the standard developmentalist ordering of the dialogues, comes before the *Meno*.[12]

It may also be argued that Plato employs hypothesis in dialogues now commonly thought to be later than the *Republic*. The inquiry into being and non-being in the middle part of the *Sophist* (237b–249d), for example, and the discussion of the claim that knowledge is perception in the *Theaetetus* (151d–184b) in fact seem to exemplify in general terms both the hypothetical mode of exploring a supposition that Parmenides recommends to a young Socrates in the dialogue named after him (*Prm.* 135d–136c) and an apparently related, if not identical, mode of inquiry Socrates recommends in the *Phaedo* (101d–102a).[13] In the *Sophist* and the *Theaetetus*, basic assumptions about reality are tested by exploring what wider consequences these assumptions will have. In the *Theaetetus*, it is made clear that the Heraclitean ontology introduced as support for the assumption that knowledge is perception renders that assumption meaningless (182c–183b). In the *Sophist*, the objectionable consequences of assuming that only forms have real being (248a–249c) or that

everything that is, is one (244b–245d) are spelled out for those who hold these assumptions.[14]

A case can also be made for the claim that Platonic division, which, according to standard accounts, is introduced only in the supposedly later dialogues, beginning with the *Phaedrus*,[15] is found in dialogues commonly supposed not to belong to this period.[16] We may again begin by looking at what many critics will tend to think of as a Socratic dialogue *par excellence*, the *Euthyphro*.

At the end of the dialogue, after his refutation of Euthryphro's attempts to define piety, Socrates steers the conversation in a new direction by asking whether (a) all that is just is pious, or whether (b) all that is pious is just, but not all that is just is pious, but only some of it is while some is not (11e7–12a2). He elaborates the distinction as follows:

SOCRATES: This is the kind of thing I was asking before, whether where there is piety there is also justice, but where there is justice there is not always piety, for the pious is a part (μόριον) of justice. Shall we say that, or do you think otherwise?

EUTHYPHRO: No, but like that, for what you say appears to be right.

SOCRATES: See what comes next: if the pious is a part (μέρος) of the just, we must, it seems, find out what part of the just it is. Now if you asked me something of what we mentioned just now, such as what part of number is the even, and what number that is, I would say it is the number that is divisible into two equal, not unequal, parts. Or do you not think so?

(12c10–d10, translation by G. M. A. Grube)

There are several noteworthy points about this passage, which make its connection to division in one form or another very striking. Most importantly, there is the use of "μέρος" and "μόριον," which strongly parallels passages like *Statesman* 262b–263b. Moreover, the very same example of dividing number into even and odd that Socrates uses is employed in the very same passage of the *Statesman* (262d–e), although for different purposes. The example found just prior to our passage, of shame being a part of fear (12a–c), is also found in the supposedly last dialogue, in *Laws* 646e4, where many scholars will consider it an instance of collection and division.[17]

Further support for the suggestion that we find division in dialogues not commonly thought to belong to the late period comes from the *Republic*, whose middle books are the *locus classicus* for the supposed middle period theory of forms and the method of hypothesis. At the beginning of book V, Socrates is entertaining a possible objection to his argument that men and women should be able to receive the same education, based on his earlier claim (advanced at 369e3–370b4) that people with different natures should do different jobs:

SOCRATES: Come, then. Let's see if we can find a way out. We've agreed that different natures must follow different ways of life and that the natures of men and women are different. But now we say that those different natures must follow the same way of life. Isn't that the accusation brought against us?

GLAUCON: That's it exactly.

SOCRATES: Ah! Glaucon, great is the power of the craft of disputation.

GLAUCON: Why is that?

SOCRATES: Because many fall into it against their wills. They think they are having not a quarrel but a conversation (οἴεσθαι οὐκ ἐρίζειν ἀλλὰ διαλέγεσθαι), because they are unable to examine what has been said by dividing in accordance with forms (διὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι κατ' εἴδη διαιρούμενοι τὸ λεγόμενον ἐπισκοπεῖν). Hence, they pursue mere verbal contradictions of what has been said and have a quarrel rather than a conversation (ἔριδι, οὐ διαλέκτῳ πρὸς ἀλλήλους χρώμενοι).

(453e1–454a8; translation by G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve, modified)

The claim that people fail to engage in conversation because they are not able to investigate something while dividing in accordance with forms is striking. We find almost exactly the same expression in the *Statesman* in a passage devoted explicitly to the question how divisions should be made, where people in general are said to throw things that are very different into the same category and to distinguish things that are really the same "because they are not accustomed to inspect things while dividing according to forms" (διὰ δὲ τὸ μὴ κατ' εἴδη συνειθίσθαι σκοπεῖν διαιρουμένους; 285a4–8, translation by Jens Kristian Larsen). Socrates' use of the expression in the *Republic* thus seems to be, on its face, an overt reference to the method of division.[18] This also makes sense in the context. The accidental eristics mentioned here err precisely because they do not attend to the proper difference between male and female, thinking that, since their nature differs in some respect (vis à vis reproduction), it should also differ in respect of the jobs they should have in the *kallipolis*. Socrates corrects them by showing wherein the relevant distinction in this context consists and how the difference that pertains to bodily reproduction is irrelevant. Moreover, the contrast drawn here between dialectical and eristic ways of dividing, and the claim that one should attend not to names (or language) but to reality, are central to the methodological prescriptions related to division in the *Sophist* (218b–c), *Statesman* (261e), and *Philebus* (14c–16a; see Adam 1902, note to *R.* 454a6). Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, the reference to division according to forms is here made almost in passing. This suggests that Plato expected his readers to understand at least the very basics of the sort of method described here *without* such dialogues as e.g. the *Phaedrus*. If the developmentalist view were correct and Plato had not yet conceived of a method of collection

and division, such a passing reference would have been less—if at all—comprehensible to his readers.

Similarities in Subject Matters Treated by the Same Dialectical Procedures in Dialogues from Supposedly Different Periods

We have seen important formal resemblances between dialogues commonly supposed to belong to different periods in Plato's work. As some of the examples we have looked at also indicate, in some cases there are parallels between the dialogues not only with respect to the way dialectical procedures are employed but also with respect to the very things they are applied to, and indeed in the very form of expression. In this section, we will compare the use of division in the *Gorgias* and the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, and the practice of *elenchos* in supposedly later dialogues to the practice in supposedly earlier ones, to show just how deep these parallels go.

In the *Gorgias*, at 450c7–e2, Socrates introduces the following division of arts:

SOCRATES: Now taking all the arts (πασῶν τῶν τεχνῶν), in some of them, I think, working is the major part and they need little speech (λόγου βραχέος δέονται), and some need no speech, but the business of the art would be accomplished even in silence, such as painting and sculpting and many others. You seem to me to mean such arts, with which you say rhetoric has nothing to do. Isn't that so?

GORGIAS: Your apprehension, Socrates, is certainly fine indeed.

SOCRACTES: And then there are other arts that accomplish everything through speech (διὰ λόγου), and need in addition almost no work or very little, such as arithmetic, calculation, and geometry, yes, and draught playing and many other arts. In some of these the speeches (τοὺς λόγους) are approximately equal to the actions, but in many the speeches are greater, and absolutely their whole action and decisive effect are through speeches. You seem to me to be saying that rhetoric is one of the arts of this sort.

(translation by Nichols Jr., modified)

We may compare this passage with the *Statesman* 258d4–e5:

VISITOR: Now aren't arithmetic, and any other arts akin to this, stripped of action, and don't they provide cognition only?

YOUNG SOCRATES: That's so.

VISITOR: But again, the arts concerned with carpentry and every handiwork possess their science as being present within the very nature of their actions, and they bring to completion bodies arising through them that weren't there before.

YOUNG SOCRATES: Certainly.
VISITOR: Well then, divide all the sciences together in this way, addressing one as practical, the other as cognitive only.
(translation by Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem, modified)

In both passages, the main interlocutor suggests that the totality of arts may be divided in two, in the *Gorgias* by the fact that the arts of one group achieve what they achieve primarily through actions, the arts of the other through speeches, in the *Statesman* by the fact that the arts of one group provide cognition only, while the arts of the other have their science imbedded in their actions. A related division carried out along slightly different lines[19] is found at the beginning of the *Sophist* (219a8–d3). The divisions from both the *Statesman* and *Sophist* are universally agreed to exemplify the "method of collection and division," and we have little reason to think that this is not the case in the *Gorgias* as well.

The similarity between the *Gorgias* and a supposedly later dialogue as regards the subject matters division is applied to is even clearer in a second set of parallel passages, this time between the *Gorgias* and *Sophist*. In the *Gorgias*, at 463e5–464b1, Socrates begins to define rhetoric as follows:

SOCRATES: Well, I shall try to declare what rhetoric is, as it appears to me; and if it happens not to be this, Polus here will refute it. You call something body, I suppose, and soul?
GORGIAS: Indeed, how could I not?
SOCRATES: So then. Do you also think there is a certain good condition of each of these?
GORGIAS: I do.
SOCRATES: What about this? Do you think there is a good condition that seems to be, but is not? I mean, for instance, something of this sort: many seem to be in good bodily condition, whom one would not easily perceive not to be in good condition, but a doctor and one of those skilled in gymnastics would.
GORGIAS: What you say is true.
SOCRATES: I say that such a thing exists both in body and soul, which makes the body and the soul seem to be in good condition, but they nonetheless are not.
GORGIAS: These things are so.
(translation by Nichols Jr.)

The definition of rhetoric Socrates is aiming at hinges on a division between body and soul and a corresponding division between good states of body and of soul and of states of these that merely appear good. To complete the definition, Socrates proceeds, at 464b3–8, to present a fourfold division of arts:

SOCRATES: Since there are two kinds of things, I say there are two arts. The one directed to the soul I call politics; the one directed to the body I am unable to name for you in this way, but I say that, while the care of the body is one, it has two parts (δύο μόρια), gymnastics and medicine; and that of politics, the legislative art is comparable to gymnastics, and justice is the counterpart to medicine.

(translation by Nichols Jr., modified)

Socrates thus divides care (θεραπεία) into four types, two directed at the body and two at the soul, and, since he suggests that lawgiving corresponds to physical training, and justice to medicine, we may assume that he means to suggest that justice helps remove what in the soul corresponds to disease, while lawgiving nurtures what in the soul corresponds to health.[20]

That this is an example of division is indicated by Socrates' emphasis of *parts* of care at 464b5–6, a point that picks up an earlier discussion concerning wholes and parts at 462e2–5 and 463d1–2. Moreover, the content of his fourfold division is also reflected in a central passage in the *Sophist*, running from 226e1 to 229a10, where the Eleatic Visitor performs a fourfold division of cleansing.[21] Here we focus only on the main parallels:

VISITOR: And anyone can see, can't they, that this form, cleansing, is itself twofold?

THEAETETUS: Yes, probably, at least if they're given time […]

VISITOR: But surely it's fitting enough to include under a single name all the many forms of cleansing there are that relate to bodies. […]

THEAETETUS: I do understand, and I agree that there are two forms of cleansing, and that one has to do with the soul, being separate from the one that has to do with the body. […]

VISITOR: Do we talk of badness as something different in the soul from goodness?

THEAETETUS: Obviously. […]

VISITOR: There are, we should say, two forms of badness in relation to soul.

THEAETETUS: What are they?

VISITOR: One is like disease occurring in a body, the other like bodily ugliness. […]

THEAETETUS: I certainly have to agree […] that there are two kinds of badness in the soul. Cowardice, lack of moderation, injustice, all of these things taken together, have to be considered a disease in us, while the widespread and ever-varying phenomenon of ignorance needs to be understood as ugliness.

VISITOR: Now in the case of the body, in relation to these two phenomena two sorts of expertise have come about.

THEAETETUS: Which are these?

VISITOR: For ugliness, the expertise of the gymnastic trainer; for disease, that of the doctor.

THEAETETUS: Clearly so.

VISITOR: Well, in the case of excess and injustice and cowardice too, isn't the punishing expertise the one that fits more than any other, and justly so? […]

And what about ignorance taken as a whole? Surely the correct expertise to talk about for this would have to be that of the teacher?

(translation by Christopher Rowe, modified)

Like Socrates, the Eleatic Visitor uses division for the specific purposes of dividing body from soul and to accord two arts to each, aimed at caring for their best condition. And like Socrates, he introduces the arts of medicine and physical training primarily for the purpose of illuminating the difference between two kinds of purification directed at the soul.[22]

As regards the use of *elenchos*, we again find striking similarities between its use in supposedly early and later dialogues. In the *Apology*, Socrates indicates that the activity of testing his fellow Athenians is aimed at exposing their ignorance concerning the greatest matters (τὰ μέγιστα; 22d7), that is, first and foremost, matters of supreme ethical and political significance (for this meaning of the expression, see e.g. *Grg*. 451d7–8 and 452d5); and the supposedly early dialogues are commonly acknowledged to be concerned precisely with testing opinions about such matters.

A closely related claim about *elenchos* is made by the Eleatic Visitor in the *Sophist* when he offers the description of it partly quoted above. In this passage he also states that those who are tested are liberated from some great and hard opinions about themselves (230c1–2) and are rendered clean and pure, supposing they know only the things they know and no more (230d3–4), and that anyone who is untested and therefore unpurified when it comes to the greatest matters (τὰ μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον ὄντα) turns out as uneducated and ugly (230d9–e2). Indeed, in the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Statesman* we see such testing in action, first when Theaetetus converses with Socrates in the *Theaetetus* and then with the Eleatic Visitor in the *Sophist*, and then when he is replaced with the young Socrates in the *Statesman*. For even if Theaetetus and young Socrates cannot be said to have great and hard or harsh opinions about themselves, the subject matters concerning which they are rendered clean and pure by being purged of their false opinions about them—knowledge, being, sophistry, statesmanship and the love of wisdom—certainly belong amongst the most important matters.[23]

Theorizing about Dialectic

We have seen that, both in terms of form and subject matters, there are close parallels between the so-called early, middle, and late dialogues in

their use of methods or procedures that are standardly regarded as part of dialectic. This is not to deny that there are differences between single dialogues when it comes to the way they emphasize these procedures in the various discussions of dialectic contained in them. But it seems plausible that these differences have less to do with the actual practices of inquiry, and more to do with what the interlocutors happen to find significant in that particular context.

Given the amount of literature on Platonic dialectic or on dialectical methods in Plato, it may be surprising to learn that there are, in fact, very few passages where Socrates or one of the other characters explicitly reflects on what dialectic is. It is true that Plato's Socrates commonly contrasts his own way of conducting conversation through question and answer with other types of discourse, such as rhetoric (*Gorgias* 447b–c, 448d–e) and sophistical teaching (*Protagoras* 334c–d). But word formations with the stem διαλεκτικ-, that is, word formations that directly imply an art or science, or the mastery thereof, only occur some 22 times in the dialogues, and explicit references to a method, science, or art of διαλεκτική in fact only occur in the *Republic* (533c, 534e; see also 532b), the *Phaedrus* (276e), and the *Sophist* (253d).[24]

In what follows, we will therefore look at passages where dialectic is explicitly associated with one or another method in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Sophist*. As we shall see, none of these passages explicitly identifies one method or procedure as dialectic. What they indicate is, rather, that dialecticians are characterized by their mastery of procedures that other people also employ—but employ incorrectly. The same picture emerges from the account of *elenchos* found in the *Gorgias* central to the work of Gregory Vlastos and the scholars building on his interpretation of the so-called Socratic *elenchus*. In other words, the passages that most explicitly discuss the procedures commonly identified with dialectic do not rule out that dialectic may employ procedures others than those highlighted in a given passage, or that it may amount to more than the mastery of such procedures.

In the *Republic*, at 533c8–d9, the μέθοδος of dialectic is said to proceed toward the "beginning itself" (αὐτὴν τὴν ἀρχὴν), while abolishing hypotheses (τὰς ὑποθέσεις ἀναιροῦσα), in order that that beginning may be secured.[25] This way of proceeding is, according to Socrates, distinguished from that of all other arts by the fact that it alone seeks, in a methodical manner, to get hold of what each thing is (533a10–c6), and the dialectician is therefore identified with the person who seeks to grasp the account of each thing's being or essence (τὸν λόγον ἑκάστου λαμβάνοντα τῆς οὐσίας; 534b3–4). The claim that dialectic abolishes hypotheses refers to an earlier discussion (510b8–511e5), in the simile of the divided line, of the difference between the way hypotheses are used by the mathematical sciences and by the power of conversation (ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμις), a discussion central to the many controversies about Plato's conception of dialectic in the so-called middle period.

However this difference should be interpreted, two important conclusions about the passages we face can be drawn. First, the use of hypotheses is not exclusive to dialectic, since dialectic is set apart from mathematics by the fact that it uses hypotheses in the right manner, not by the simple fact that it uses them. Second, Socrates does not seem to be suggesting that the use of hypotheses is all there is to dialectic. Nothing in these passages suggests that using hypotheses is all that is required for grasping the account of each thing's being. Moreover, at 537c6–7, the dialectician (ὁ διαλεκτικός) is characterized as the one who is capable of taking a synoptic view (συνοπτικὸς), that is, of being able to see things together and the kinships between them. This description,[26] when taken in conjunction with the fact that the inquiry into the being of justice that constitutes the *Republic* is both exceedingly long and complex, should rather lead us to suspect that Socrates holds that testing opinions, using analogies, myths, and the like, are part of dialectic as well.

In the *Phaedrus* and the *Sophist*, διαλεκτική is intimately connected with the activities of collecting and dividing. In the *Phaedrus*, at 266b3–c1, Socrates states that he calls dialecticians those who are able to look toward what is naturally one and many, and that he himself is a lover of collections and divisions.[27] In the *Sophist*, at 253d1–e2, the abilities to divide in accordance with kinds, and to see forms that stretch through several others, are said to belong to dialectic, abilities that in the *Statesman* (at 285a4–b6) are contrasted with the way ordinary people are wont to collect and divide things.

Without entering into the discussions surrounding these controversial and complex passages,[28] we may again draw two conclusions. First, dialectic is not identified *simpliciter* with the ability to collect and divide; what the passages make clear is, rather, that, in order to be able to collect and divide correctly, that is, in accordance with natural kinds or forms, one has to master dialectic. Second, while the ability to collect and divide in this way is certainly characteristic of the dialectician, the passages do not state that this is all the dialectician is able to do. Indeed, the complex inquiries into *eros*, sophistry, and statesmanship in which these passages are imbedded again suggest that dialectic is, first and foremost, aimed at getting hold of the being of these matters and that reaching this goal requires a number of procedures in addition to collection and division.

We may finally look at a passage from the *Gorgias*, namely 471e2–472d4, where Socrates explains what he understands by ἐλέγχειν, the act of testing or cross-examining the opinions of others, when one is conducting a conversation, and contrasts this with what some people think amounts to such a cross-examination in forensic contexts. Here we only wish to emphasize two important points. First, Socrates here contrasts a correct way of testing someone and an incorrect way; this indicates that, if ἐλέγχειν is a procedure of dialectic, as some scholars claim, it is not simply the use of such a procedure that makes an inquiry

dialectical, but only the correct use of it (one may compare this distinction to *R.* 538d–539c). Second, the overall inquiry into rhetoric that stands central in the *Gorgias* certainly employs many other procedures than the testing of opinions, for instance, as discussed above, the use of collection and division, and also the use of myths and complex analogies; and since this inquiry is, at the beginning of the dialogue (447b–c), highlighted as a dialectical inquiry into the nature of rhetoric, we may conclude that these procedures are dialectical procedures in this dialogue. Therefore the contrast that Socrates is here drawing does not show that he understands dialectical inquiry to consist exclusively in using the "*elenchus*."

Overview of the Anthology

Given the fact that few passages in Plato's dialogues explicitly discuss dialectic or the procedures characterizing this expertise or science, a more comprehensive picture of Platonic dialectic requires a careful consideration of the entire corpus, including passages that discuss dialectic more loosely as well as the actual practice of dialectic found in the dialogues in addition to passages which discuss dialectic more explicitly. The chapters of the anthology collectively tackle these tasks.

There are several similarities and shared traits across the chapters, with regard to the topics they treat of or the passages or dialogues they discuss; for example, several of the chapters discuss passages that explicitly describe dialectic or the procedures that have commonly been regarded as dialectical procedures or methods, other chapters explore how the dialectical argument unfolds in particular dialogues, and yet others focus on specific traits of Plato's manner of argument. The same passages and dialogues turn up as central to the argument in different chapters, sometimes approached in very different ways.

Because of the variation in the different chapters' approach to the question what dialectic is, they do not fit into general categories that might potentially articulate various aspects of Platonic dialectic; rather than attempting to force them into such categories, we have decided to arrange them in accordance with the alphabetical order of the surnames of their authors. The fact that we have not attempted to subsume the individual chapters under such general categories may also, we hope, help the reader approach Platonic dialectic with fresh eyes, and without presupposing the categories the volume as a collected whole seeks to question.

Hayden W. Ausland argues in Chapter 1 that the use of hypotheses must have been a feature of Socrates' own philosophical practice. He allows that dialogues conventionally regarded as early Platonic productions (or questionable dialogues regarded as imitations of these) exhibit a dialectical practice quite likely resembling one that was employed by the historical Socrates, arguing that this practice includes the use of hypotheses. He further argues that viewing Platonic instances alongside the

argumentative practices of the Socrates found in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and Aristophanes' *Clouds* corroborates the suggestion that the historical Socrates employed hypotheses in philosophical inquiries.

Emily Austin tackles the *Euthydemus* in Chapter 2. The dialogue contains a reference to dialecticians (290c), which is rare in Plato, but its argument, or at least the argument in the parts led by the brothers Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, is often dismissed as ironical. Austin argues that the connection between the parts led by the brothers and Socrates respectively is more complex than commonly recognized. She further argues that Socrates in the final section of the dialogue presents a solution to a crucial puzzle set out previously concerning the object of the expertise of the statesman. According to Austin, Socrates identifies that object as the form of the beautiful, separate from the many beautiful things. The dialectician and statesman, she argues, may be the same person; for they differ only by the way their respective types of expertise are related to the form of the beautiful.

In Chapter 3 Francisco Gonzalez raises the question what young Socrates learns about dialectic from Parmenides in the dialogue named after him. Gonzalez argues that the training Parmenides recommends is centered on the use of hypothetical reasoning for the purpose of seeing "the truth in the best manner" and that such a sight depends on the "wandering" that, according to Parmenides, dialectic consists in. Gonzalez argues that the young Socrates of the *Parmenides* learns that it is possible to maintain opposite conclusions regarding a nature (*eidos*) that can appear in opposite ways because such a nature exists beyond its temporal manifestations and that the mature Socrates of the—dramatically speaking—later dialogues employs the hypothetical reasoning recommended by Parmenides.

In Chapter 4 Vivil Valvik Haraldsen addresses the question how the account of dialectic in the *Republic* is connected with the dialogue's overall argument in favour of the just life. The passages in the dialogue describing dialectic and the dialectical person who masters it are all found in the books V–VII. These books inquire into the insight required of the persons fit to rule in the good city and this inquiry is introduced in order to aid the overall inquiry into the just soul. Haraldsen argues that a widespread interpretation, according to which the just person is identical with the philosopher-ruler and the highest dialectical insight is required for being just, leaves the argument of the *Republic* a failure. She maintains that this reading is implausible, and that the account of dialectic has a different, important role to play in the overall argument, namely to cast light on the function and possibilities of human reason and to provide a paradigm for the role of reason in the just life.

In Chapter 5 Cristina Ionescu raises the question how *elenchos* and collection and division are related in Plato's *Sophist*. In contrast to most critics, who see these procedures as being opposed to each other, Ionescu

argues that the main interlocutor of the *Sophist*, the Eleatic visitor, uses them in conjunction and that they support one another: by testing our beliefs, we become better at making correct divisions, and the understanding of kinds that result from correctly performed divisions in turn make our tests and refutations more successful.

In Chapter 6 Jens Kristian Larsen argues that Plato's *Statesman* shows why the use of examples forms a crucial part of dialectical inquiry. For the dialogue makes clear that examples are tools eminently suited to train the abilities of collecting and of separating things central to dialectic. It further indicates that they help facilitate our understanding of "greater matters," such as statesmanship and philosophy, because examples, when duly recognized *as* examples, help us realize what such matters have in common with what is less significant but more familiar, while at the same time highlighting the radical difference between them.

Peter Larsen approaches Plato's practice of using examples in dialectical inquiry in Chapter 7 through a detailed reading of the initial inquiry into virtue found in the *Meno*. Larsen points out that Socrates offers Meno two example answers meant to help Meno answer the question "what is virtue?" in the way Socrates wants him to answer. Many critics argue that the answers provided by Socrates to the questions "what is color?" and "what is shape?" are primarily meant to illustrate the proper form of an answer and are not necessarily definitions of color and shape—a suggestion that seems to carry weight in the light of the fact that Socrates offers two different answers to the question what shape is. In contrast, Larsen argues that the two answers to what shape is are in fact definitions of two different kinds of shape. In this way he is able to argue, contrary to many commentators, that Socrates only understands the "what is F?" question in one way in this dialogue.

In Chapter 8 Walter Mesch argues that, while there are both stylistic and argumentative differences between the hypothetical early-, middle-, and late period dialogues, the fundamental tenets of the most popular versions of developmentalism are implausible. Special attention is given to the objects of dialectic. Mesch argues that in early period dialogues, the question of the status of forms is never clearly raised, while in the middle and late periods, even though Plato consistently claims that dialectic is first and foremost concerned with unchanging forms, it can also have other objects. In contrast to both unitarians and developmentalists, Mesch argues that Plato has a relatively stable set of dialectical procedures that he uses differently in different dialectical contexts.

In Chapter 9 Vasilis Politis tackles the famous account of dialectic in the central parts of the *Republic* and argues that the dialogue identifies dialectic first and foremost as a power in us that comes to expression in a variety of ways, including the search for knowledge that, all things going well, may terminate in knowledge. If this power is to fulfil that aim, the *Republic* makes clear, the soul must be liberated and reoriented, and,

Politis argues, this explains why the path toward knowledge as well as the liberation of the soul are identified as dialectical in the *Republic*. The fact that the search for knowledge for Plato depends on a radical reorientation of the soul also demonstrates, he urges, that Plato's essentialism differs from its modern counterparts.

In Chapter 10 Catherine Rowett argues that Plato uses genealogical stories as a method for conducting philosophical inquiry and engaging in debate on issues in morality and political theory. Rowett examines four such specimens presented by characters other than Socrates, from the *Protagoras*, the *Laws*, the *Statesman*, and the *Symposium*, and argues that these myths about the origins of human society present and defend hypotheses central to the inquiry of their respective dialogues. Such "bygone ages" stories, she urges, are not merely distractions or entertainment, but are important philosophical arguments: they explore deep and challenging issues in philosophical anthropology, and reveal the power of genealogical narrative in the philosopher's toolkit, as a way to pick apart the formative contribution of nature and nurture, respectively, for establishing a functioning society and its value system.

In Chapter 11 Pauline Sabrier addresses a crucial question concerning Plato's method of dialectical inquiry in the *Sophist*. According to many scholars, when the interlocutors inquire into being in this dialogue, they raise the question what things there are and seek to bring the inquiry to completion by answering this question. But if this is correct, this procedure will differ significantly from the procedure Socrates urges his interlocutors to follow in, for instance, the *Meno* and the *Theaetetus*: to settle the question what something is by focusing on its essence, and not on examples of it. Sabrier argues that the dialogue raises two questions, "what things are there?" and "what is being?," and indicates that they can only be answered if one raises them in conjunction and understands their complex interdependence.

In Chapter 12 Marilena Vlad analyzes the connection between dialectic and divination in Plato's *Phaedrus*. On her account, dialectic is rooted in and begins as a kind of divination. In particular, she argues that dialectic depends on a kind of *philosophical* divination and that this type of divination accounts for the complex connection between Socrates' two speeches in the dialogue. The procedures of collection and division may be regarded as tools, she further suggests, that a dialectician may use to translate his or her philosophical divination into a message that human beings can receive, much the way that poetry is a way in which poets may translate their divinations.

In Chapter 13 Justin Vlasits claims that the divine method of inquiry introduced at the beginning of the *Philebus* is applied in Socrates' examination of knowledge. After giving a preliminary account of the method, he argues, against Dorothea Frede, that Socrates provides both a comprehensive conception of knowledge and a coherent division into subkinds.

Central to his argument is the claim that the *Philebus*, like Plato's *Gorgias* and *Sophist*, makes use of a cross-cutting division, in which a kind is cut along more than one dimension simultaneously.

Notes

1 We thank Hayden Ausland for helpful comments and suggestions.

2 See Nettleship 1901, 278. Richard Robinson even suggested (Robinson 1953, 77) that, because Plato "was so absolutely certain … that the supreme method has its being only in conversation … he could name it from this fact; 'dialectical' method means conversational method".

3 The view that dialectic is particularly important to Plato's place in the history of philosophy goes back at least to Diogenes Laërtius who in his *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers* (III.56,5–8) states, "the *logos* of philosophy was first only of one kind, the physical. Socrates added the second part, the ethical. Plato added the third part, the dialectical, and completed philosophy" (translation by Justin Vlasits).

4 Ancient Platonists like Olympiodorus and Proclus also recognized the importance of what modern scholars are wont to think of as the "Socratic *elenchus*" when pointing out that one needs to be purified from the false belief one might have that one knows what one does not—a condition they called "double ignorance" (cf. Proc. *In Alc*. 174–5; see also Renaud & Tarrant 2015, 35)—if one is to make any progress through philosophical inquiry. They did not, however, regard it as a dialectical procedure, as modern scholars do.

5 Modern developmentalist approaches to Plato may be said to depend on two main assumptions: on the one hand the assumption that Plato's philosophical views developed and matured gradually over time and that the doctrines and philosophical views found in his dialogues give expression to this development; and, on the other, the assumption that stylistic studies of the dialogues can reveal their relative dates of composition. The first assumption originates with the work of K. F. Hermann, who, objecting to Friedrich Schleiermacher's view that the order of, and differences between, Plato's dialogues could be explained as an expression of Plato's pedagogical views, argued that Plato's work must be regarded as "a lively, organic development" that can only be apprehended scientifically "from this point of view." More specifically, he claimed that the "diversity" of the dialogues necessitates that we assume "certain stages in his [Plato's] own process of development" (1839, 351–352). The second assumption arose in historical-rhetorical studies of the mid-nineteenth century aimed at correlating Plato's dialogues with the datable works of Isocrates. Such studies developed, among others, a hypothesis that Plato during a certain period bound himself by certain stylistic rules such as the avoidance of hiatus—a feature that does, indeed, show an affinity between five dialogues: *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*. The now generally accepted view of a partly corresponding set of late dialogues goes back chiefly to Lewis Campbell (1867). For context and additional detail, see Ausland 2001. However, even if stylistic studies may be said to have established with some plausibility that what are now generally held to be Plato's late dialogues belong to one distinct period of writing, stylistic studies do not establish any clear division between the hypothetically early- and middle period dialogues or between the middle and the late dialogues, or support the common habit of regarding some dialogues as being transitional between the periods. In fact, what is to be regarded as an early- or middle period dialogue will depend on various views about Plato's development, for instance how

close Plato was at a given period of time to the supposed doctrines of the historical Socrates or what attitude he had to political or metaphysical questions, and all such assumptions may, of course, be questioned.

6 For emphasis of division in dialogues now commonly regarded as belonging to the early or middle period, see also Lukas 1888 and Hamlyn 1955.

7 For critical discussions of these assumptions, see Howland 1991 and Ausland 2001, as well as Wieland 1982, 83–94. Both Leo Strauss (1964) and Jacob Klein (1965) object to the idea that Plato's dialogues can be read as treatises reporting his doctrines and to the notion that knowing their relative date of composition is key to understanding his philosophy, as does, to some extent, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1978, 9–10, 17–18). Other scholars who in various contexts express reservations about developmentalist approaches to Plato include Charles Kahn (1996), John M. Cooper (1997, xii–xviii); and Myles Burnyeat (2012, 238).

8 For additional discussion of the way the procedures commonly identified with dialectic—*elenchus*, *hypothesis*, and collection and division—supplement each other, see the chapter by Walter Mesch in this anthology.

9 Translations marked "modified" have been amended by the authors for greater clarity and relevance to the argument.

10 See Friedländer 1945, 253, Robinson 1953, 12–13, 18.

11 For discussion of *elenchos* in the *Sophist*, see the chapter by Cristina Ionescu in this anthology.

12 For further discussion of the use of hypothesis in the supposedly early dialogues, as exemplified by the *Charmides*, see the chapter of this anthology by Hayden Ausland. For dialectic in the *Meno* in particular, see the chapter by Peter Larsen.

13 For further discussion of Parmenides' recommendation, see the chapter of this anthology by Francisco Gonzalez.

14 For further discussion of the way hypothetical argumentation is used in the *Sophist*, see the chapter of this anthology by Pauline Sabrier.

15 See e.g. Hackforth 1952, 134.

16 See Lukas 1888.

17 Euthyphro's answer, moreover, has a direct parallel in the *Divisiones Aristoteleae* (DA 4, Dorandi 2016), which divides justice into the spheres of mortal humans, the divine, and the dead. Taken together, these points strongly hint at a divisional method being used to search for a definition, in this case, of piety.

18 That the passage from the *Republic* mentions division is noted in Friedländer 1960, 95–96, Hamlyn 1955, 289, and McCabe 2015, 101. George B. Kerferd states that antilogic (or disputation), as discussed in the passage, is set apart from dialectic by the fact that it "lacks … the power to discuss on the basis of Division of things by Kinds" (Kerferd 1981, 63–64), but he does not pursue the question what Socrates means by division, while Alexander Nehamas briefly touches on the passage and points out that dialectic, in contrast to mere verbal distinctions, "aims at the discovery of the real nature of things" (1990, 11), but he does not discuss why the "discovery" of such natures should depend on division. Both Franz Lukas (1888, 10) and James Adam (1902, note to 454a5) connect the passage with the so-called method of division, but they do not offer any detailed interpretation of it. Dimitri El Murr (2020, 89–90) remarks briefly on the technical terminology of the passage but does not discuss division in any detail. By contrast, Stenzel (1917, 49–50) denies that the passage has any connection with the supposedly later method of division, since, he claims, such a self-conscious method as the one we find in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* must be motivated by considerations very

different from those found in the *Republic*. This seems to be little more than special pleading. Stenzel presupposes that the terms *diairesis* and *koinônia* mean something significantly different in the *Sophist* from what they mean in the *Republic* because, on his view, they are introduced in this supposedly later dialogue as part of a solution to problems identified in the *Parmenides* that, again on the same view, marred the theory of ideas as expressed in for instance the *Republic*. In other words, if Plato already knew that Forms could take part in one another and that dividing them correctly was important, the whole point of the critique found in the *Parmenides* and the solution presented to that critique in the *Sophist*, as this is read by Stenzel, would be pointless (see Stenzel 1917, 50). But this argument already seems to presuppose the view of Plato's development that Stenzel is arguing for.

19 The Eleatic Visitor himself stresses that the divisions of the arts in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* should not be conflated (*Plt*. 258b10–11).

20 On this passage and its relation to the *Philebus*, see the chapter by Justin Vlasits in this anthology.

21 This parallel was pointed out by Friedländer 1960, 337n9.

22 Compare also *R*. 332c4–d6

23 Knowledge is identified as one of the greatest matters at *Theaetetus* 148c7–8; in the *Sophist* the form of what is is said to be divine (254a8–b1), the philosopher's love of wisdom is described as "pure and justified" (253e5), and even the sophist is identified as one of the greater matters (at 218d8–9); in the *Statesman* the political expertise is explicitly said to belong to the greatest matters (292d4–5). The *Theaetetus* as a whole makes clear that Theaetetus' opinions about knowledge lead to self-contradiction, and the inquiries of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* into sophistry and statesmanship reveal that the young interlocutors of these dialogues have misguided opinions about both (*Sph*. 221d3–4 with 231b9–c2; *Plt*. 262a3–c1). On the use of examples in order to understand the greatest matters in the *Statesman*, see Jens Kristian Larsen's chapter in this anthology.

24 In addition, there are passages where the verb διαλέγεσθαι is used in a clearly technical sense, meaning something like "engaging in dialectical inquiry," such as *Parmenides* 135c, *Theaetetus* 161e, and *Republic* 511b and 532d; but even these are not very numerous.

25 For further discussion of the μέθοδος and δυνάμις of dialectic in the *Republic*, see the chapters of this anthology contributed by Vasilis Politis and Vivil Valvik Haraldsen.

26 The chapters in the anthology by Francisco Gonzalez and Vivil Valvik Haraldsen respectively both discuss this description.

27 For further discussion of this description, see the chapter by Marilena Vlad in this anthology.

28 Interpretation of the passage 253 d1–e2 from the *Sophist* is particularly controversial; see e.g. Stenzel 1917, 62–71, Gómez-Lobo 1977. See also the chapters by Cristina Ionescu and Pauline Sabrier in this anthology.

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1 Socrates' Dialectical Use of Hypothesis

Hayden W. Ausland

Prior to the onset of modern critical scholarship, Socrates was credited with a conversational method compounded of two elements, irony and induction.[1] An early comprehensive account of Plato's dialectic distinguished it accordingly from both Socratic and Aristotelian: where Socrates had chiefly employed induction, as Aristotle would syllogism, Plato cultivated a dialectic based on collection and division. In this account *elenchos* and *hypothesis* had only ancillary roles.[2] This picture was modified during the second half of the 19th century, under the influence of a view that Plato's works are best understood as falling into three distinct periods reflective of a developing personal philosophical outlook.[3] Initially accepted ideas about the makeup and character of these periods underwent one significant change before settling into an assumption about Plato's philosophical development that, over a century later, still serves as a postulate in numerous studies of ancient philosophy.[4]

Two corollaries of particular relevance here were developed during the first half of the 20th century. One was Julius Stenzel's thesis that the Platonic method of collection and division was a defining feature of his late period; the other, Richard Robinson's account of a complementary "earlier" dialectic of Plato, which he distinguished into a Socratic method he dubbed "the elenchus" and a Platonic "method of hypothesis" characteristic of a middle period.[5] The resulting conventional history of Platonic dialectic holds that, after an early period in which he imitated Socrates' negative elenctic style,[6] Plato developed a quasi-scientific use of hypotheses with a view to arriving at positive results, but, finding himself without a means of verifying these conclusively, later took refuge in logical classifications anticipatory of the materials subsequently employed in Aristotelian syllogistic.[7]

Maintaining this developmental story requires ignoring or playing down observable instances of one or another method in dialogues judged to be of periods other than the ones of which they are held characteristic.[8] In view of such phenomena, an alternative way in which to explore the question is to lay aside what are by now rather stale assumptions about

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Platonic development, so as to observe how all three styles may figure in various ways at any point throughout the corpus. This requires, in turn, an openness to understanding the terminology of elenchus, method of hypothesis, and collection and division as having significantly broader application than is implied by narrow formulations based on occurrences in arbitrary groupings of Platonic dialogues. This need is especially clear when trying to explain a singular method of hypothesis, inasmuch as even the three or four contexts chosen as embodying it seem to exhibit clear differences in the ways they conceive such a method.[9]

The present study forms part of this greater task, seeking to discern the extent to which a use of hypothesis can be said to have been an observable feature already in Socrates' own dialectical practice. It can to this end stipulate that dialogues conventionally regarded as early Platonic productions (or questionable dialogues regarded as imitations of these) exhibit a dialectical practice quite likely resembling one that was employed by the historical Socrates. Corroboration for conclusions arrived at by examining mentions or uses of hypothesis in these will be sought in alternative versions of hypothetical reasoning depicted in Xenophon and Aristophanes. A few special problems of interpretation can be addressed by adducing further evidence of comparable usages of contemporaneous writers, notably Isocrates and Aristotle, and coordinate statements of rhetorical theory or philosophical explanation. The overall goal is a better appreciation of literary depictions of the rhetorical-dialectical practice in which so much that strikes later readers as theoretical views peculiar to some philosopher or school in fact occurs.

A noteworthy fact generally passed over or played down in conjectural views about Plato's development is the way the main character of several supposedly early dialogues speaks explicitly of *hypothesizing* something as a basis for dialectical conversation with various interlocutors. Such mentions occur in the *Euthyphro*, *Charmides*, *Hippias Major*, *Protagoras*, *Republic I*, and the *Rivals*—the last is normally held to be of extra-Platonic authorship, but Socratic in character. It would appear that the Socrates of Plato's early style of dialogue—*ex hypothesi* the "real" Socrates of conventional modern Platonic interpretation—is already familiar with dialectical reasoning based on hypothesis in some form or other.[10] What form this is we will try to outline after some pertinent historical considerations.

That the historical Socrates was familiar with some such method as well seems likely in view of the account of Plato's contemporary Xenophon, who has something to say about Socrates' cognizance and use of dialectical conversation.[11] Since Schleiermacher first formulated a modern view of Socrates' philosophical significance, Xenophon's Socrates has normally been held to be of less interest than Plato's character. Without going into the arbitrary and anachronistic reasons for this estimate, we may note that a well-known later description of Socrates as the philosopher

who brought philosophy down from the heavens into the lives of men seems to recall primarily Xenophon's account.[12] Xenophon mentions and illustrates argumentative types found also in Plato's dialogues, while tending to present these within the categories of ancient rhetorical theory—a fact that must be borne in mind in order to appreciate his account.[13]

Xenophon's Socrates is primarily a practical philosopher, and sees a practical purpose for dialectical conversation, which Xenophon first mentions in a chapter he announces as explaining how Socrates made his companions "more skilled in the realm of action" (πρακτικώτεροι), where we see him employing a combination of precept and example. Socrates, he says, thinking self-control a good quality of one intending any fine action, first showed himself (αὐτὸς φανερὸς ἦν) to his companions as one superlatively self-disciplined, and second in the course of conversing would exhort (διαλεγόμενος προετρέπετο) his companions above all to self-control (*Mem*. 4.5.1). Xenophon proceeds to report such a conversation between Socrates and Euthydemus, which ends with Socrates' summary conclusion:

> Only for the self-controlled is it possible to consider (σκοπεῖν) matters of the greatest moment, and, by sorting them out in both word and deed in accordance with kinds (καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ διαλέγοντας κατὰ γένη), prefer the good things and reject the bad.[14]

Xenophon's own summary statement follows: "And in this way, he said, men became best and happiest, and most capable of conversing (ἀρίστους καὶ εὐδαιμονεστάτους … καὶ διαλέγεσθαι δυνατωτάτους)." In explanation of an apparent play on words, he adds that Socrates offered an etymological account to the effect that the verb "converse" (διαλέγεσθαι) itself refers ultimately to the activity of those in companionship deliberating in common as they sort out practical matters according to kinds (κατὰ γένη). It was therefore requisite [sc. Xenophon reports Socrates as saying] that one endeavor to prepare oneself as ready as possible relative to this and to cultivate it most of all. For it is from this that men come to be best, most leaderlike, and most adept at conversation (διαλεκτικώτατοι).[15]

Xenophon's summary statement serves also to introduce the subsequent chapter, which elaborates how Socrates rendered his companions more skilled in conversation (διαλεκτικώτεροι). As Xenophon tells us, Socrates thought that while (a) those knowing what each of the things that are is (τί ἕκαστον εἴη τῶν ὄντων) could also explain this to others, (b) it would be nothing surprising if the ignorant trip up both themselves and others—for which reason he never ceased considering with his companions what each of the things that are is (σκοπῶν σὺν τοῖς συνοῦσι τί ἕκαστον εἴη τῶν ὄντων 4.6.1). Before reporting a series of conversations along these lines, Xenophon allows that, whereas it would be a great task to go through everything in the way he would make distinctions (πάντα

… ᾗ διωρίζετο), he will recount so many as he thinks clarify the manner of his inspection (ὁ τρόπος τῆς ἐπισκέψεως). We are in this way prepared for a series of typical definitional conversations or teachings, of which we are given seven: on piety, justice, wisdom, the useful, the beautiful, courage, and the several forms of government (kingship, tyranny, aristocracy, plutocracy, and democracy). In all but the last case, which simply reports Socrates' own teaching, the conversations reported feature a by now compliant Euthydemus in the role of Socrates' interlocutor.

Having reported these, Xenophon appends a case illustrating Socrates' technique when confronted with an uncooperative interlocutor who contradicted him about some matter, having nothing clear to say, but making some claim without supporting demonstration—an assertion that someone was wiser, more skilled in the art of politics, more courageous, or something of the kind. Socrates would in such cases "draw the entire discourse up toward its *hypothesis*" in a manner he proceeds to illustrate (4.6.13: ἐπὶ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν ἐπανῆγεν ἂν πάντα τὸν λόγον ὧδέ πως). His example features an unnamed interlocutor claiming that a man he praised was a better citizen than one Socrates did, to whom Socrates animatedly urges that they first submit to scrutiny the question, what the task of a good citizen is (14: Τί οὖν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο πρῶτον ἐπεσκεψάμεθα, τί ἐστιν ἔργον ἀγαθοῦ πολίτου;).[16]

An inductive series of particular illustrations—finance, war, diplomacy, public speaking—shows how via such "arguments being drawn upward" (τῶν λόγων ἐπαναγομένων) the truth became evident even to those contradicting him. Xenophon here adds that, when Socrates himself went through some point in argument, he would proceed via steps most agreed-upon (διὰ τῶν μάλιστα ὁμολογουμένων ἐπορεύετο), thinking security in argument (ἡ ἀσφάλεια … λόγου) to consist therein. As a result, when he spoke, he left his hearers in agreement to a far greater degree than anyone else Xenophon knew. He (sc. Socrates) said that Homer awarded Odysseus the title of "safe rhetor" (ἀσφαλὴς ῥήτωρ) on the ground that he was adept at leading arguments through matters men thought true (διὰ τῶν δοκούντων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις).

Socrates' statement about Odysseus ends Xenophon's account of his dialectical technique, in which students of Plato will at least faintly recognize several strains. To recapitulate: Socrates made men more adept at action, recommending self-control as necessary to being able to "sort out" matters of the greatest moment "according to kinds," and he made them more skilled in conversation by considering "what each of the things that are is" or, in the case of resistance, by "leading the argument upward to its hypothesis." The three phrasings suggest the constructive dialectical techniques conventionally held most characteristic of Plato's late, early, and middle dialogues: generic division, ethical definition, and hypothetical reasoning. It is noteworthy in this connection that the

closest approximation in Xenophon to what Robinson calls the elenchus and regards as the basic "method" of the early Plato's Socrates—although it is unknown as such to the tradition—is found in Socrates' handling of unfounded contradiction via a reduction to the argument's *hypothesis*.[17] Evidently Xenophon failed to see these as the distinct methods modern scholarship holds them to be.

It here becomes hard to avoid facing a possibility apt to tempt philologians engaged in source-criticism, namely that, when he came to write his Socratic works, Xenophon had already read at least some of Plato's dialogues, on parts of whose contents he will have relied in composing his own works—but without adequately grasping the nature or significance of those contents.[18] That this might be the case seems corroborated by the fact that, after acknowledging the difficulty there would be in going through all the matters Socrates distinguished, he says—and here alone—that he will "endeavor" (πειράσομαι) to treat of the chapter's subject matter.[19] Is this a tacit acknowledgement of his uncomprehending reliance on more complicated exchanges making up Plato's works? If so, then its value as independent testimony to the real Socrates' dialectical activity comes into serious doubt.

There remains, however, a third contemporary witness—and one antedating the others—in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, a play first staged in 423 BC, when Plato was four years of age, and Xenophon about seven. In this comic drama, a character Socrates is brought on stage saying and doing all manner of things that brand him either a natural historian like Anaxagoras or Diogenes of Apollonia (now usually called Presocratic philosophers) or a sophist like Protagoras or the brothers in Plato's *Euthydemus*. At his later trial, according to Plato's version, Socrates would seek to defend himself against what he claimed was a distortion of his actual record, but it has for some time now been recognized that Aristophanes' portrait not only could accurately reflect the man as he existed in 423 B.C., but even exhibits features common to the Socrates of Plato's and Xenophon's literary works.[20]

One feature they share is seen the way Plato and Xenophon too seem at times to infuse Socrates' conversations with what, since Aristotle, has been distinguished as sophistical argumentation.[21] Nonetheless, it would probably be more persuasive if one could locate some argumentation of a more constructive nature in the *Clouds*—some application of division, definition, or hypothesis, for instance. Let us consider whether any such argumentation characteristic of Plato's and Xenophon's Socrates can be found there, bearing in mind the generic requirements of Athenian old comedy.

The *Clouds* tells the story of the intellectual and moral corruption of a young man, Pheidippides, whose aging father Strepsiades initially approaches Socrates, who is in charge of an innovative school of some kind,[22] in order to learn rhetorical techniques useful for avoiding having

to pay his debts.[23] Socrates professes to be able to teach him these things, and undertakes to do so, but at length determines that the senior is unable to retain anything he is taught: Strepsiades is made the stock comic character of the *opsimathes* (late-learner), one among several that Theophrastus will sketch in his *Characters*, and the same Plato will invoke in his *Sophist*.[24]

During the second half of the play, Socrates undertakes to educate the young Pheidippides instead of trying to school his father, with predictably hilarious—if also ominous—results. The central scene that concludes with his turning to do this depicts what we may call Socrates' "final examination" of the older student he has been working with. The examination proper begins as follows:

SOCR: Come now, cover yourself, and with your sharpened mind subtly (σχάσας τὴν φροντίδα λεπτὴν)
itemize and review your business affairs (κατὰ μικρὸν περιφρόνει τὰ πράγματα),
distinguishing and considering rightly (ὀρθῶς διαιρῶν καὶ σκοπῶν).
STR: Alas! Poor me!
SOCR: Be still; and if you be perplexed in one of your ideas (κἂν ἀπορῇς τι τῶν νοημάτων),
move on, letting it go, and then do in turn with your thought again bestir (τῇ γνώμῃ πάλιν κίνησον)[25] it once more and weigh it in the balance.
[or: place it under lock and key][26]

(Aristophanes, *Clouds* 740–745)

This dramatic passage employs multiple systems of interlocking images, among which feature several dialectical motives found in Socrates' conversations as depicted by Plato and Xenophon. Aristophanes' character emphasizes a speculative approach for his practically-oriented interlocutor, whose pupil-like request to be spoon-fed answers is met with his teacher's invitation to him first to find out for himself what it is he wants, and then frame an account of it. The old man holds his goal long since obvious: he wants some way of avoiding the payment of interest. But Socrates elevates this question to a more general and speculative level, bidding him examine his affairs both comprehensively and in detail, while employing in the right manner both distinctions and consideration. Following Strepsiades' tragic outcry at the prospect of so much trouble, his master bids him to remain calm, and to defer any seemingly insoluble problem to a future occasion on which he can come to grips with it again more conclusively.

Characteristic terminology is suggestive.[27] Especially relevant in the present connection, are references to mental prompting (κινεῖν), division (διαίρεσις), consideration (σκοπή), and perplexity (ἀπορία). A prompting

of thought can occur as a means of initiating a discussion from the outset, or as a way of starting anew when faced with some perplexity.[28] Commentators usually explain the reference to division in one of various overly-specific ways.[29] But that Aristophanes' Socrates could have employed analytical division in some related sense well before his supposed transfiguration in certain dialogues the mature Plato wrote seems clear enough.[30] Thoughtful consideration is manifestly a characteristic of philosophical activity carried on by Socrates in both Plato's and Xenophon's works. Perplexity is a well-enough known result of it in Socrates' interlocutors to have led to the modern designation—unknown as such to the ancients—of a special refutative method, and the concomitant isolation of a group of aporetic dialogues therefore deemed characteristically Socratic in manner. Evidently the historical Socrates that Aristophanes lampooned on the public stage during Plato's and Xenophon's childhoods could be credibly portrayed as familiar with all these devices.

To re-state the matter relative to conventional modern views about Plato's development, already in this introductory exhortation we find in close proximity brief but unmistakable references to right consideration (ὀρθῶς … σκοπῶν), attended both by division (διαιρῶν) and by perplexity (κἂν ἀπορῇς τι), two ways of speaking modern scholars associate with Plato's later dialectic, and the Socrates of his early dialogues, respectively. This leaves his supposed middle period, with its hypothetical method, the role of which in the *Clouds* is terminologically less obvious.

What follows Socrates' introductory exhortation is a series of three dialectical exchanges in which Socrates urges the old man to explain devices by which he can avoid paying his debts, i.e. forensic measures designed to obscure his responsibilities, and Strepsiades performs in response. In technical terms, his greater task is one of rhetorical invention,[31] but his mode of explanation is dialectical, in that the old man lays out what he has discovered by taking the lead in a series of questions and answers.

It will be sufficient to quote and analyze the first such exchange:

STR: O dearest little Socrates …
SOCR: What, old man?
STR: I have a thought [γνώμην] apt for abstracting interest.
SOCR: Display it.
STR: Well, now tell me …
SOCR: What?
STR: … if, by purchase of a Thessalian sorceress,
I should by night bring down Selene, and then
should confine her in a round crest-case,
like a mirror, and then should maintain steady watch on her …
SOCR: What then would this benefit you?
STR: What?

If Selene should nowhere ever rise again,
I would not pay up the interest.
SOCR: For what reason, then?
STR: Because it is monthly that money is put on loan.
SOCR: Very well, but ….

(*Clouds* 746–756)

The practical thought (γνώμη) Strepsiades has discovered relies on the fact that debts become due monthly, so that he will not be obligated to pay them if there is no lunar cycle, and therefore no month. The underlying reasoning is sound enough (in essence: my being obligated to pay interest on a debt requires that the monthly due date comes around, so if there is no monthly due date, I am not obligated to pay), but, as is regularly true of arguments in dialogical contexts, it requires spelling out various intermediate steps in order to see the valid chain of reasoning. What is of primary interest at present, however, is not its formal validity, but the conversational form in which Strepsiades' insight is presented to Socrates. This is framed grammatically as an inquiry ("Well, now, what if I should do X? Wouldn't then Y happen?") equivalent to a conditional statement with the optative mood in both clauses ("If I should do X, Y would happen.") Grammarians disagree on the propriety of calling this a "future less vivid" conditional sentence with Goodwin; here we will prefer Gildersleeve's alternative designation of it as "ideal."[32] In rhetorical terms, it is what later technical manuals will classify as a proof "in accordance with a hypothesis" (καθ᾽ ὑπόθεσιν). A 2nd century AD catalogue of rhetorical figures explains it as follows:

> The [figure] according to a hypothesis [καθ' ὑπόθεσιν] is a clarification [δήλωσις] of a matter neither come about nor coming about, but with the speaker supposing [ὑποτιθεμένου], "Should such-and-such come about, what would follow?" [εἰ τὸ καὶ τὸ γένοιτο, τί ἂν συμβαίη]—as for instance: "If Leucon, then, in a message to us inquires [ἆν δὲ δὴ πέμψας πρὸς ἡμᾶς Λεύκων ἐρωτᾷ …], having what complaint and finding what blame we stripped him of his exemption from public burdens, what by the gods shall we say [… τί πρὸς θεῶν ἐροῦμεν]?" [33]

The general figure is outlined with an ideal condition, but the example cited contains an anticipatory (Goodwin's "future more vivid") condition, and parallel accounts indicate that several such conditional forms, including unreal, can so function.[34] This rhetorical figure is embedded in a particular dramatic context in the passage quoted from the *Clouds* (Table 1.1 - overleaf).

If we now restate Strepsiades' hypothesis dialectically, he begins by asking Socrates, "Do you agree that on the supposition that I do X, Y is the necessary result?" What kind of premise is this?

Table 1.1

logical course of thought	*rhetorical-dramatic form*
(a) money is due monthly (b) the month requires moonrise (c) no moonrise if I hide the moon (d) I can do this with a witch (1) I buy a witch and so hide the moon (2) I hide moon and so no moonrise (3) no moonrise and so no month (4) no month and so no money due	Hypothesis: If I should buy a witch to hide the moon, then [the moon could not rise, and] 1. If the moon could not rise, I would not have to pay, since 2. [If the moon did not rise, there would be no monthly due date; but] 3. debts are due on a monthly date. (The omissions indicated by brackets occasion the interlocutor's inquiries.)

In the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle will speak of some proofs and syllogisms as being "out of" or "from a hypothesis" (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως).[35] What little he has to say about this kind of argumentation has been rendered harder to construe by his later Greek commentators' conflating it with the "hypothetical syllogism" of Aristotle's peripatetic successors.[36] As pointed out some time ago by Paul Shorey, the latter was unknown to Aristotle himself, whose references to argument from a hypothesis are better understood by comparing the use of hypothesis in such Platonic dialogues as the *Meno*. The precise interpretation of the pertinent texts in Aristotle is a matter of controversy,[37] but it is unnecessary to decide the question in order to appreciate Shorey's related observation that, since Plato never argues from necessary principles of the kind theorized in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and employed in Euclid's *Elements*, an argument from hypothesis in his works seeks *an agreed-upon beginning* of some kind from which then to infer consequences. Put another way, Plato's hypotheses are irreducibly dialectical in the sense that they are conversational in their very nature.[38] And it is arguments built upon these, not reasoning from necessary premises, that Shorey argues were the model for Aristotle's argument from a hypothesis.

One here notes a resemblance to the idea, mentioned above as surfacing in Xenophon, that Socrates practiced a safe kind of dialectic by proceeding via things most agreed-upon (διὰ τῶν μάλιστα ὁμολογουμένων), or through what men think so (διὰ τῶν δοκούντων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις).[39] For Aristotle, moreover, such a feature will distinguish dialectical from apodeictic reasoning.[40]

To return to Aristophanes: the proof "according to hypothesis" spoken of in rhetorical manuals is commonly found in forensic contexts as a rhetorical question either left unanswered or answered by the speaker himself. That we find it here in dramatized conversation is appropriate to conventions observed in iambic (i.e., non-choral) sections of the play—a

circumstance recalling to us that the Attic drama, along with the prose Mime, has been held to have provided a literary model for Plato's dialogues. In the case of the *Clouds* in particular, however, an intellectual who professes to be able to teach persuasive speaking is a main focus of Aristophanes' humor. His Socrates' pedagogical approach is discernible beginning with the Chorus' inviting him to examine Strepsiades' natural aptitude (476–482) through his decision to reject him as a student (783–790). That the final examination of his pupil should elicit a demonstration of a rhetorical manner of proof adapted to dialectical form is thus likely intended to reflect the compound nature of Socrates' pedagogy.

Two further arguments following the one about monthly billing are both of the same general form and aim at the same conclusion: "If I should do X, then the result would be Y, which would entail that I should not have to pay my debts."[41] One proposes using an ancient magnifying glass at a distance to burn out the lettering in a written indictment,[42] the other, resorting to suicide in order to render oneself immune to prosecution. All three devices, then, invoke what we may call "legal technicalities" presented in hypothetical form. Socrates praises the second argument, but balks once he sees the conclusion of the third coming.[43] What seems to make him lose patience with Strepsiades is not any argumentative fault, however, but its impractical upshot: "Should I hang myself before my court date, they would be unable to charge me."[44] The old man is by now so caught up in his clever devices that he has lost sight of their very purpose, for the premise of the entire scene was Socrates' urging Strepsiades to escape imminent destruction by discovering a "swindling intellect and cheating-device," or a "fleecing contrivance from the sheepskins"[45] Socrates throws over him (723–730). Aristophanes accordingly now employs the late-learner motif, making Socrates expose the way the old man has forgotten the first thing he learned, and thereby effecting a transition to the second main part of the play.[46]

Aristophanes' Socrates seems quite at home with argumentation later called "according to hypothesis" by technical writers, most likely due to this form of argument's already being a familiar move for the rhetoric of the day. It is here unnecessary to explain its exact relation to dialectical argumentation "from hypothesis" of the kind mentioned by Aristotle and found in Plato's Socratic dialogues.[47] In view of Strepsiades' repetition of an at least kindred technique, together with Aristophanes' related mentions of initial testing, provocation, examination, division, and perplexity, we have no good reason to imagine that Xenophon would have had to rely on any of Plato's dialogues in composing his own account of Socrates' use or teaching of dialectic. We see rather that already Aristophanes' caricature parodies several characteristic dialectical moves, including three procedures conventionally held special to distinct modern chronological groupings of Plato's dialogues.

Returning to Xenophon, we note that he speaks of Socrates' practice of "leading" an argument "back up," i.e. of recalling it, to its *hypothesis*. What does he mean with this phrase?[48] Suggestive are two 4th-century parallels, of which the first is found in Isocrates' *Panegyricus*, a highly-wrought speech dated to 380 B.C.—when many modern scholars believe Plato was writing the dialogues of his middle period.[49] Isocrates has been going on about the Lacedaemonians, but then recalls matters to his point of departure:

> But if we have to leave out of account considerations of gratitude and fairness, and, returning to the main question [ἐπὶ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν πάλιν ἐπανελθεῖν], state the point which is most essential, assuredly it is not ancestral custom [οὐ δή που πάτριόν ἐστιν] for immigrants to set themselves over the sons of the soil [τῶν αὐτοχθόνων], or the recipients of benefits over their benefactors, or refugees over those who gave them asylum.
>
> (*Panegyr*. 63, trans. George Norlin)

Isocrates' diction can be rich while remaining precise. By *hypothesis*, he means simultaneously rhetorical premise and argumentative principle. Discerning these exactly is complicated by the complexity of the speech in respect of rhetorical genre.[50] It begins by announcing a deliberative aim—the unification of Greeks against Barbarians under Athenian leadership—but then embarks on an elaborate praise of Athens as a means of justifying the Athenians' title to the leadership for which he is recommending them. As a result, a majority of his speech is designed as a praise of Athens introductory to his advice to an international audience, so that, if one disregards the fact that the Lacedaemonians have failed to render the thanks and justice due them, and returns to the speech's premise, the principle by which the "autochthonous" (i.e. indigenous) Athenians are never to submit to rule by others is clear. Isocrates' *hypothesis*, then, is his greater task of praising Athens and then advising the Greeks, the first stage of which begins in a regular way with genealogical matters—here, the claim that Athenians, in contrast to Dorians of the Peloponnese, are aboriginal inhabitants of the Greek soil.[51]

A second contemporary parallel to Xenophon's phrasing is found in the *Parmenides*, the Platonic dialogue featuring by far the most extensive application of argumentation from *hypothesis*.[52] Having gone through a number of consequences of the first hypothesis of eight in all, Parmenides asks his interlocutor, a young man named Aristotle, whether they should from the outset once more return (literally "proceed upward") to their hypothesis, in order that they may see whether it appears to be of some other quality to them as they do. This they do, thereby commencing a second list of new consequences.

> Shall we, then, go back to our hypothesis and reconsider it from the beginning [ἐπὶ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπανέλθωμεν], in the hope of bringing to light some different result? 'If a one is' [ἓν εἰ ἔστιν], we say, we have to agree what sort of consequences (τὰ συμβαίνοντα) follow concerning it. Start afresh [ἐξ ἀρχῆς], then, and consider. If a One *is* [ἓν εἰ ἔστιν], it cannot be, and yet not *have* being. etc.
>
> (Plato, *Prm*. 143b1–6, trans. Francis M. Cornford)

Other contexts make it clear that Parmenides uses *hypothesis* in this dialogue to refer to the protasis of a conditional statement made the basis of further inferences, and so compatibly with the way it will have been used in the rhetorical tradition.[53] But his hypothesis in both these cases is a protasis notoriously difficult to construe or translate, vis. "if one [sc. thing] is." The distinction between the two arguments seems to turn on emphasis: whereas the first hypothesis considers what follows from "one [thing]" alone, the second moves to consider what follows from "is," i.e. the consequences of predicating being of "one [thing]."[54] The Eleate's next move, accordingly, is to re-state the premise: "If there is one [thing], we say, whatever consequences there may be from this should be agreed upon" (*Prm*. 142b3f.). Thus, like Strepsiades, Parmenides employs argumentation "from hypothesis" with the young Aristotle in a sense anticipating what another, later Aristotle will specify in his *Prior Analytics*.

If we compare these three contemporaneous occurrences, it emerges that "return to, or recall, the premise" might be the most adequate translation for the phrase Xenophon uses, whether it be the premise of a literary, rhetorical, or dialectical argument.[55] Given conventional assumptions about their specifically Platonic character, how this use may be related to the ways hypotheses figure in the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic* is a question extending beyond this study, the proper aim of which is to determine the role of *hypothesis* in Socrates' dialectic more generally. We may therefore instead consider whether such a conception can be seen to inform what are conventionally held to be Plato's earlier—and as such presumably most Socratic—dialogues.

Provided one looks for them, dialectical hypotheses, together with some criticisms of them, are to be found in a number of dialogues exhibiting characteristically Socratic conversation.[56] We can here examine an illustrative example from one of these. In the *Charmides*, Socrates is engaged with Charmides and Critias in a search for an adequate account of temperance. An interim conclusion comes at 171d1–172a9:

> Then what benefit, said I, would there still be for us from a temperance being of such a character? For if [εἰ μὲν], as we hypothesized from the start [ὃ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπετιθέμεθα], the temperate man knew [ᾔδει] both that he knew the things he knew and did not know the things that he did not know and was also competent to discern

> another who had been affected the same way, it would be of very great benefit [μεγαλωστὶ ἂν ἡμῖν … ὠφέλιμον ἦν] for us to be temperate; for we would live life thoroughly faultless [ἀναμάρτητοι γὰρ ἂν τὸν βίον διεζῶμεν]. … But as it is [νῦν δέ], I said, you see that no knowledge that is of such a quality has anywhere come to light. I do, he said.
>
> (171d1–172a9)

This counterfactual conclusion and several related passages in the dialogue will be better understood if we first trace the general course (as distinct from any problematic details) of the greater argument within which they occur. After first prefiguring the problem of temperance, the opening drama introduces a question in the dialectical form Xenophon tells us was characteristic of Socrates, "What is temperance?" Charmides first replies that temperance is all told a certain quietness (συλλήβδην ἡσυχιότης τις, 159 b5). Socrates begins to consider this answer by securing agreement to the further statement that temperance is one of the things that are fine (τῶν καλῶν, 159c1). After then establishing that quickness is just as much among things that are fine, Socrates concludes that temperance cannot rest in quietness any more than in quickness, "since in the argument temperance was hypothesized as one of the things that are fine" (ἐπειδὴ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῶν καλῶν τι ἡμῖν ἡ σωφροσύνη ὑπετέθη, 160d1f.) while things quiet and quick have turned out to be equally fine. Framing an adequate logical analysis of this argument can pose a challenge.[57] Important here, however, is that the attempt to delimit temperance as a quietness runs afoul of something else to which Charmides is committed, namely its fineness. Within the argument, the fineness of temperance functions as an unquestioned hypothesis, and, after the argument is concluded, Charmides remains unwilling to give it up, so that he and Socrates have to look elsewhere for an account of temperance. Charmides next tries saying that temperance is just what modesty (αἰδώς) is, but this account quickly shows similar weaknesses.[58]

He therefore resorts to something he has heard from someone—that temperance is "minding one's own business." Such an account requires explanation, which Critias now seeks to provide, taking over for Charmides as the respondent responsible for the hypothesis (ὑποθέμενος σωφροσύνην εἶναι τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, 163a7). After making some distinctions, he accepts a restatement of this hypothesis by which it now holds that temperance is engaging in good actions.[59]

After Socrates raises some problems to do with men's knowledge of what they do, Critias modifies his position to say that temperance is self-knowledge in the sense of a knowledge of knowledge. Socrates' examination of this statement is rather involved, reaching a preliminary point at which he finds it convenient to put aside the question whether or not a knowledge of knowledge is possible and the question whether this is

what temperance is, but instead to concentrate on the question whether a temperance so conceived, on the assumption that it were possible, would be of any actual benefit.[60]

Challenging Critias to explain how self-knowledge enables men to know what they do and do not know, Socrates proceeds to show that a knowledge of knowledge could be of virtually no benefit, since knowledge falls in every instance within the province of a special science. It is this point that he is making in the passage quoted above. Critias' understanding of temperance seems inadequate in that it fails to explain how this will amount practically to knowing what one does and what one does not know—in which would lie any benefits of self-knowledge.[61]

Socrates at this point takes a more active hand in the discussion, saying that he wonders about the soundness of their search thus far, since such absurdities have followed from their hypothesis (τεκμαίρομαι δέ, ὅτι μοι ἄτοπ' ἄττα καταφαίνεται περὶ σωφροσύνης, εἰ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν. 172c5–6). He proposes that they now grant the statement that temperance is knowing what one does and does not know, so as to proceed to consider of what benefit temperance then will be. Expressing doubt about the statement he has just made that a temperance of the kind they have been discussing would be of great benefit, Socrates develops the further absurdity that temperance can be of no advantage whatever on the assumption that it is self-knowledge in the sense they have been entertaining.[62]

In view of these results he now justifies his earlier qualms about the soundness of the inquiry:

> Do you see, then, Critias, how reasonably I earlier feared and how I justly blamed myself for considering temperance in no sound way? For what is agreed to be the finest of all things, this would surely not have appeared useless to us [οὐ γὰρ ἄν που ὅ γε κάλλιστον πάντων ὁμολογεῖται εἶναι, τοῦτο ἡμῖν ἀνωφελὲς ἐφάνη], were I of any use [εἴ τι ἐμοῦ ὄφελος ἦν] toward sound investigation. As it is [νῦν δὲ] [sc. it is otherwise, and I am useless in investigation] for we are worsted on every front, and are incapable of discovering to which of the things that are the legislator gave this name, temperance.[63] And yet we have conceded many things that failed to follow in our argument [καίτοι πολλά γε συγκεχωρήκαμεν οὐ συμβαίνονθ' ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ λόγῳ].
>
> (175a9–d5)

On the basis of a series of hypotheses, i.e. of propositions allowed or granted,[64] Socrates, Charmides, and Critias have failed of an adequate definition of temperance, arriving instead at *aporia*, or perplexity—with which this Socratic dialogue, like several others, ends. Students of Plato's dramatic technique will appreciate the way his Socrates here reflects his earlier counterfactual reasoning when describing their perplexity:

Dialectical reasoning:

> (171d–172a) If what we hypothesized had been so, temperance would have proved a great benefit to us; but as it is, [we see no evidence of this, so it must be otherwise].

Dramatic reflection:

> (175a–d) If I were of any use [sc. dialectically], our agreement would yield no paradox; but as it is, you see that despite our best efforts [it has, so that etc.].

Analogous dramatic reflections of hypothetical arguments occur in several dialogues,[65] but one example suffices to show Plato's awareness of what he is doing.

In asking ourselves for now only what the literary purpose of a dialogue concluding in perplexity of this kind could be, it is worth reflecting that, in addition to the hypotheses offered and considered within the clearly dialectical part of the discussion, the entire dialogue—like Isocrates' *Panagyricus*—serves itself as a kind of hypothesis, both in the general sense that it presupposes the fictional occasion it depicts (cf. the notion of a dramatic hypothesis or "argument")[66] as well as in the more particular way that even its negative, or "destructive," conclusion can serve as a foundation for the young Charmides' (or even a reader's) further inquiry.[67]

Notes

1 Brucker 1742 I, 532 [Enfield 1819 I, 168] (citing Cicero and Quintilian). Socrates' irony was traditionally located in his profession of ignorance. The modern view of Socrates as a budding scientist begins with Schleiermacher 1818, on which see Ausland 2005b, 494–6. On Socratic induction, see Ausland 2012.
2 Van Heusde 1827–36, 2:2, 76–226 (1842, 236–314).
3 See Oldenberg 1873, 36.
4 The thesis of Plato's personal philosophical development originated with Karl Friedrich Hermann (1839), who modified a different principle of ordering by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1804). The version seen today begins in England with Lewis Campbell (1867), as later brought to general notice by Wincenty Lutoslawski (1897). It can here be mentioned that the notion that stylistic criteria can neatly distinguish middle from late dialogues is mistaken (see Ledger 1989, 214–5 and Brandwood 1990, 250–1). That such features distinguish early from middle dialogues has even less foundation; the conventional distinction between Socratic "early" and Platonic "middle" dialogues in fact relies on an application of Aristotle's *testimonia* to Schleiermacher's picture of Socrates originating with Christian Brandis in 1827, rather than on any observable changes in Plato's style. See Ausland 2019, 691–6.

5 See Stenzel 1917, 45–54; Robinson 1941, v–vi. With the logician's reduction of Socrates' method to *elenchos*, there comes an insensitivity to its ironical dimension. See Robinson 1941 8–10, 18–19, and 101 [1953, 8–10, 18–19, and 97], elaborated upon with a thinly veiled antipathy in Vlastos 1991, 19–44. Thrasymachus' more open expression of contempt for "Socrates' customary εἰρωνεία" (*R.* 1. 337a4f.) is the rhetorician's appeal to a vulgar incomprehension of it (on which see Cornford 1914, 161 [1934, 139f.]). For Socratic irony related to irony more generally, see Fowler 1926, s.v. "Irony".

6 The conception of Socrates as essentially critical of accepted ways of thinking is Hegelian in origin (initially aired in Rötscher 1827); but Robinson was the first to assimilate Socratic method itself to what he called the elenchus, which his followers have tended to equate with refutation. More accurately construed, ἐλέγχειν refers to questioning someone to probe his position, whereas demonstrating a position's falsehood or impossibility is better expressed with the compound form ἐξελέγχειν. Contrast Xenophon *Ap.* 18, where the defendant entertains the unlikely hypothesis that someone should refute (ἐξελέγχειν) him as a liar, with Plato *Ap.* 21b2–c2, where Socrates speaks of his questioning acknowledged authorities in order to probe (ἐλέγχειν) the oracle's meaning - sometimes mis-characterized as his undertaking to "refute" Apollo. For numerous examples illustrative of the difference, see Ast 1835–38, svv. Heinrich Maier more accurately allowed that the testing, elenctic questioning, was Socrates' dialectical tool, adding that the irony with which he justified this (viz., his characteristic profession of ignorance mentioned by Aristotle) was for the sake of awakening a consciousness of real ignorance in his interlocutor, in order that he might move toward self-awareness (1913, 366–72). Once an interlocutor confesses bewilderment, the Platonic Socrates can leave aside such questioning and commence more constructive engagement of some kind; see the transitions at *Euthphr.* 11b6–e4, *R.* 1. 334b7–c3, and *Alc.* I. 116e2–4, 118e5–b3, 124b7–c2 and 129a2–6. With the last one may compare X. *Mem.* 4.2.23–24.

7 For a summary of the conventional position, see Rickless 2007, 1–2.

8 The Socrates of the *Euthyphro* employs something rather like Platonic division in his analysis of piety (12c10–d11), and the Athenian *Xenos* of the *Laws* begins his discourse by isolating a political principle in a fashion reminiscent of the dialectical method described in the *Republic* (cf. Pl. *Lg.* 626b6–d9 with *R.* 6. 511b3–c2). Robinson (1941, v [1953, v]) allows for any of the methods turning up anywhere in the corpus, holding that his association of them with differing stages in Plato's thought reflects only a predominance of one or another kind. Robinson holds that Socratic morals were in the process of becoming Platonic science, but his approach to methodical phenomena is relatively open in comparison with many derivative treatments.

9 Oldenberg 1873, 35–6.

10 Having initially isolated a method he calls the elenchus and associated it with induction and definition, in his second part's preliminary chapter, Robinson first isolates a general notion of hypothesis as a beginning of a train of thought, proceeding to set out several features of its use by Plato, in whose hands it is (a) deliberate, (b) methodically deductive rather than intuitive, (c) maintained by avoiding logical contradiction rather than tested via sense-experience, (d) provisional rather than fixedly dogmatic, and (e) approximative rather than determinative. The chapter ends with the synthetic conclusion that the modern notion of a hypothesis as something to be ascertained is found in Plato "only subordinately to the original notion … from which it arose due to Plato's conception of the Socratic elenchus" (1941, 117 [1953, 113]). Robinson notes

examples of the terminology's being used of an argument's refutand: *Chrm*. 163a, 171d, 172c; *Euthphr*. 11c, *Phd*. 94b, and *Tht*. 165d. But he hesitates to grant such occurrences a self-conscious significance—even to the limited extent he accords this to more clearly methodological mentions found in the *Meno* and other dialogues he assumes were subsequently conceived and written. For well-stated criticisms of the assumption of a modern superiority in perspective (toned down, but not eliminated, in Robinson's second edition) see Friedländer 1945 and Cherniss 1947, 133–46.

11 See Ross 1933, 21.

12 Cicero, *Tusc*. V.10; cf. the statement in X. *Mem*. 1.1.11–14 with the briefer defense in Plato (*Ap*. 19b3–d7) containing no suggestion of a transformation.

13 Clarity about Socrates' employment of elenctic questioning has been hampered by philosophical scholars' deficient familiarity with the categories and principles of ancient rhetoric, by which *protrepsis* (exhortation) is a species of deliberative speech, whereas *elenchos* (cross-examination) is an instrument employed in the forensic kind. For the three basic genres (forensic, deliberative, and demonstrative or epideictic), see Aristotle, *Rh*. I.3 1358a36–b8 and cf. Lausberg 1960, §22–27. Classical writers often interweave two or even all three genres for various effects, but they will not unwittingly confuse them in the way modern scholars often do (contrast Isocrates 10.14f. or Thucydides 1.37.1 with several positions mentioned in Natali 2006, n8). Consequent difficulties in understanding three terms (προτρέπεσθαι, προάγειν, and ἐλέγχειν) Xenophon uses together at *Mem*. 1.4.1 (for a review of which see Dorion 2003, CXXVI–CXXXIII) might be addressed by applying them to the cave-image of *Republic* 7: cross-examination is a confrontational preliminary necessary then to move a prisoner to direct his attention away from insubstantial shadows toward their artificial originals, in order that he may subsequently be led upward step-wise to the sunlit realm. In the terms of the requirements of rhetorical address, they reflect the canonical requirement that a speaker render his audience from the outset attentive, well-intentioned, and docile (see Lausberg §§ 266–279). For the forensic character of *elenchos*, the ancient conception of the scope of protreptic discourse, and the mixed rhetorical form of "positive" exposition, see Ausland 2002, 2003, 2005a respectively.

14 *Mem*. 4.5.11. σκοπῶ refers primarily to visual experience: "look at", "behold" and is applied figuratively ("examine", "inspect") to dialectical inquiry (see *Mem*. 1.1.11f. & 15, 1.4.7, and 2.6.1). In the course of such inquiries it can govern either general accusative objects (*Mem*. 2.5.5, 4.5.11, al.) or simpler indirect questions (*Mem*. 2.1.1, 2.10.6, al.), notably ones of the form "What each of the beings is" (*Mem*. 1.1.16, 3.9.8f., 4.6.1 and 1.2.50). Xenophon reserves the related deponent σκέπτομαι ("look about", "consider from multiple angles", "think through") for speaking of relatively complex questions requiring that one grasp an analogy, make a comparative judgement, reason from end to means, or the like (*Mem*. 2.2.2, 2.6.38; 2.1.10, 3.6.5; 4.4.12; 1.4.1, 2.1.16, 3.4.11, 3.6.13, *Oec*. 9.2, 18.3, *Smp*. 8.39 and, presumably, 2.5). Neither verb as such means "seek", investigate", or "inquire", although they can so *refer*, by implication, e.g. when used with indirect questions.

15 *Mem*. 4.5.12.

16 On the force of the aorist, see K.-G. §386, 10 and cf. Cooper *Att. Gr. Synt*. 53.6.2: "The speaker presents himself as surprised that accomplishment has not already occurred."

17 *Mem*. 4.6.1. In an exploration of the understanding of dialectic to be found in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Carlo Natali takes for granted Robinson's notion of the elenchus and its characteristic appearance in Plato's Socratic dialogues,

arriving at the conclusion that "Xenophon's dialectic is different from the dialectic of Plato's early dialogues" (Natali 2006, 4–6 and 19). As true as this may be of the picture Robinson developed, it might have been more fruitful to allow for some reconsideration of these by now too complacent categories themselves in the light of what Xenophon says of certain Socratic critics at *Mem*. 1.4.1f. (programmatically quoted on page 5).

18 See Marchant 1923, xxi–xxii; Christopher Moore construes the point differently (2018, 6 n19).

19 Brought out by Leo Strauss (1972, 116), who is at the time wondering to what extent Xenophon identifies dialectic with an art of speaking, i.e. with rhetoric.

20 First developed at length in 1826 by Johann W. Süvern, who was prompted by some observations of Ludolf Dissen in 1812.

21 A case in point is Socrates' suspect use of the topos of a science of opposites on which both Socrates' procedure in Plato's *Hippias Minor* and his mollification of Euthydemus in Book 4 of Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (4.2.12–23) turn. The dialectical movement common to these two texts leads to results scholars almost universally regard as morally unacceptable, and it has accordingly been labelled sophistical and fallacious, i.e. as an argument of the kind Aristotle explains how to combat in the *Sophistici Elenchi*.

22 On the pompously comic tone of φροντιστήριον, see Goldberg 1976.

23 In the terms of ancient rhetorical theory, these techniques would fall among those proper to forensic rhetoric, the rhetoric proper to law courts, as opposed to those specific to deliberative bodies or special occasions—deliberative and demonstrative (epideictic), respectively. See note 13 *supra*.

24 Nowadays styled the non-traditional student. See Theophrastus, *Characters* 27 and Plato, *Sophist* 251b5–c7. For further ancient references, see Tarrant 1996, in which Plato's use in the *Sophist* is viewed as seriously reflective of Socrates himself.

25 The text of 744f. is uncertain, with corresponding semantic implications. Various remedies proposed envisage different objects for κίνησον. Here Dover's text is presupposed. For a prominent Platonic instance of the method of reengaging with a perplexity previously set aside, cf. *R*. 5. 457e7–458b8 with 466d6–9 and 471c3–472b2.

26 There are alternative possible interpretations of the verb ζυγώθρισον, a *hapax eiremenon* formed from a noun ζύγωθρον (itself deriving from ζυγοῦν and ζυγόν). The root idea is that of a yoke—whether meant as a bar with which to make a doorway fast, or a balancing bar of a scale. Its concrete meaning and associations in the context are obscure on either understanding.

27 In the instructions given to Strepsiades (723–745), the root φρεν-/φρον- appears five times: three in the verb φροντίζω (724f. and 735), once as its corresponding noun φροντίς (740), and once the compound περιφρονῶ (741). The use of γνώμη, or judgement (730 and 744; picked up by Strepsiades at 747) as a basis for prudent action, was current in Aristophanes' day (notably in Thucydides' usage; cf. Arist. *EN* 6.11.1243a19f.); in the *Clouds*, it is both an intellectual faculty (157, 761, al.) and an argumentative virtue deriving from it (316–318); cf. Snell 1924, 32-3. The primarily rhetorical task of discovery or invention (ἐξευρετέος 728; ἐξευρών 737) can also play a pivotal role in the Platonic Socrates' teaching (see Pl. *R*. 7. 520e3–521a9).

28 Socrates can move someone else physically or figuratively (Pl. *Amat*. 132b3–7 and 134a3f.), typically doing the latter in order to induce an interlocutor to speak (Pl. *Ly*. 223a1f., *R*. 1. 329d7f., *Chrm*. 162c6-d1, X. *Mem*. 4.2.2). This is accomplished by inducing reflection, so that one may speak of motivating

thought or some problem for thought (Pl. *R*. 5. 450a7–b2 [where cf. Pl. *Phlb*. 14d4–e3], *Tht*. 163a7–10, *R*. 7. 524e2–525a2, *Smp*. 198e4f., *Plt*. 277d6f. Cf. Arist. *Metaph*. M 9 1086b2f.).

29 Starkie (1911, ad loc.): "an amusing allusion to the Socratic διαίρεσις ('analysis with a view to classification,' cp. X. *Mem*. IV. 2, ib. 5 §12)". Jan Van Leeuwen (1898, ad loc.) thinks first of Prodicean euphuism, noting the middle-comic Epicrates' later use of the term, among others, when parodying Plato's school. Karl Joël (1901, II.ii. 828) hears "die Differenzierungsmethode des Prodikeers Antisthenes." Benjamin Rogers (1916, ad loc.), after comparing a number of passages in Plato, observes: "Though it may be interesting to illustrate the language put into the mouth of Socrates by Aristophanes with the language put into his mouth by Plato, we must not suppose that the terms were, or that Aristophanes intended to represent them as being, in any special sense Socratic; they were terms of which any philosopher or sophistical teacher would naturally make use." A scholiast plausibly construes it in the light of the earlier injunction that Strepsiades begin by surveying his affairs (741).

30 See also Pl. *R*. 5. 454a1–9 and 476a4–b9, and cf. Stenzel's efforts to dissociate these passages from his idea of a later Platonic method (1917, 49–52).

31 ἐξευρίσκειν is used at 728 and 737; cf. 137, 228, and 896 and εὑρίσκειν 76 and 232.

32 See Goodwin 1873, 69–72; Sewall 1874, 79; and Gildersleeve 1876. On the preferability of Gildersleeve's understanding, see Pritchett 1955.

33 Rufus Soph. *Ars Rhetorica* I.468.28–33 Spengel. The example derives from Demosthenes, *Adv. Leptinem* 38f.

34 A variant account of the figure cites Demosthenic examples containing unreal and simple future conditional statements (Anon. *de Fig*. 3.127.1–12 Spengel [= VIII, 635.8–18 Walz]; 19.42; 23.123) adding Homeric prototypes with mixed and ideal conditionals. (B.80 and B.123-128, respectively; on the latter see Eustathius ad loc.) See also Anon. *de Fig. in Herm.libris* περὶ εὑρέσεων *et* περὶ ἰδεῶν III, 708.21–25 Walz and cf. Hermog. *de Id*. 1.11 (287.25–288.12 Rabe), where Dem. 19.42 and 18.22f. are adduced as simpler and more complicated varieties, respectively. Quintilian cites both counterfactual and future less vivid instances from Cicero's speeches (5.10.95–99, closely followed at Iul. Vict. 403.11–25 Halm).

35 *APr*. 1.23. 40b23–25 and 41a37–b1; cf. 1.44, where Aristotle discusses the non-reducibility of such syllogisms to the regular figures, promising an apparently unfulfilled treatment of them on their own terms.

36 On the logic of hypothetical arguments, and their differences from syllogisms in traditional logic, see Joseph 1916, 335–44.

37 To the extent that more recent studies mention Shorey's (1889) differentiation and derivation of Aristotelian arguments ἐξ ὑποθέσεως, they endorse his view (Striker 1979, 34; Crivelli 2011, 143–4 and 146–9; and, implicitly, Strobach 2001 and Bobzien 2002, 364–72).

38 Consonant with his tendency to view Plato's hypothetical methods as protoscientific in character, Robinson dissociates hypothetical reasoning based on premises shown or otherwise held to be false from argumentation Plato speaks of in the terminology of "hypothesizing", justifying this on the ground that in such cases Plato employs the terminology of concession, or agreement (1941, 101–2 [1953, 97–8]). Given the dialectical character of hypothesis, however, this can hardly disqualify such cases.

39 *Mem*. 4.6.15. In both Xenophon's and Plato's works, we see Socrates gaining an interlocutor's assent to some proposition, but beyond hypotheses and ἔνδοξα, these are normally meant to follow in some way from some previous

proposition(s). The clarity with which different interlocutors appreciate this varies. A clueless Hippias balks at a conclusion irrespective of its logical dependence on what precedes (*Hp.Mi.* 375d3–7), Theodorus and the young Aristotle hesitantly admit an inference (*Tht.* 170e4–6 and *Prm.* 147b6–8—notice their uses of γε) and an astute Protagoras rejects what he holds a faulty conversion (*Prt.* 350b6–351d2). But all such contexts indicate that what is in principle agreed upon in these cases is a proposition viewed as the result of an inferential step from something else. Xenophon's use of the present (rather than the aorist) tenses in ὁμολογουμένων ἐπορεύετο conveys a dynamic picture: Socrates was in the habit of making his way with others through matters that were being agreed upon. But it at the same time suggests that the concessions via which Socrates was in the habit of arguing were of the kind to which people generally would agree.

40 Arist. *Top.* 1.1 100a25–b23.

41 Strepsiades' repeated use of optative, rather than subjunctive, protases here has been explained as necessary to Socrates' continued toleration of his "arrogant stupidity" (Morris 1875, 47–8—although see also Goodwin 1876, 100). Probably better is to allow that it marks the speculative character of his hypotheses, and their connection with his stated wish to free himself of his debts. See Gildersleeve 1876, 8: "The Ideal condition (εἰ with the optative-optative with ἄν) is the condition of the fancy. There is often an element of wish for or against, of hope, of fear. It is the great condition of illustration, and is often used in comparisons, where those untrained in Greek modes of conception would expect the Unreal condition."

42 Strauss observes that Strepsiades' first two demonstrations rely upon physical knowledge about the moon and sun, respectively (1966, 26–7).

43 Droysen conjectures that something has fallen out of the text after 782; cf. Strauss' perplexity at Socrates' concluding only now that Strepsiades has a bad memory (ibid).

44 The manner in which Strepsiades achieves his goal brings to mind a paradox Chrysippus later posed against the Peripatetics. See Alex. *In An. Pr.* 177.25–178.5 and Philop. *In An. Pr.* 165.27–166.6 and cf. Mates 1953, 30 and 39 n56.

45 Adapted from Felton's (1858) approximation of an obscure Aristophanic joke at 729f. with a clearer English one.

46 One may here mention the complementary theme of learning as recollection occurring in several Platonic dialogues, and cited as a ground for regarding the *Meno* as transitional to a middle period. Plato's practice of presenting it in mythical terms and Xenophon's more prosaic use of it (on which see Wellman 1976) suggest that it was more a conventional literary-pedagogical device than the philosophical doctrine it is usually considered by Platonic scholars. Something similar likely holds of Socrates' obstetric art (Pl. *Tht.* 148d4–151d6 and 210b4–d1), which Süvern (1826, 8) and Adolf Römer (1896, 228) find alluded to at *Clouds* 137. See Rogers 1916 and Van Leeuwen 1898 ad loc.

47 Aristotle's prepositional construction presents a hypothesis as a species of argumentative principle. The rhetorician's use of κατά with the accusative conceives it rather as a fictional plot on the basis of which a likely story is developed.

48 Natali translates "he would lead the discussion up to the assumption," but his discussion of the context is caught up entirely in the theme of *elenchos* (2006, 14).

49 Xenophon's Socratic writings can with reasonable confidence be dated after 399 BC. Where they fall beyond that is a matter for speculation; Marchant, with some adherents, thinks beginning ca. 385 (1923, xi); others follow

Marschall's lower dating in the 360's (1928, 5; for a review of more recent speculations, see Dorion 2003, CCXL–CCLII). But this problem, if at all soluble, is hardly relevant here. Isocrates' different use of phrasing found also in Xenophon indicates that both writers are working within established rhetorical practice. If anyone supposes that Xenophon's phrase ἐπὶ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν ἐπανῆγεν in a Socratic passage is an uncomprehending imitation of Plato, Isocrates' use of the same terminology should raise doubts—unless we are to imagine that Isocrates noticed a Platonic dialectical formula and decided he could adapt it for use in an epideictic context. Given Isocrates' thematic use of the term, this seems extremely unlikely (see *Ep.* 6, 8–10). See, more generally, Trimpi 1971, 43–55 [1983, 50–8]). In a study undertaking to demonstrate—down to specific wordings—how Xenophon relied on Plato in describing Socrates' dialectical methods, Andreas Patzer (1999) somehow overlooks both Platonic and Isocratean parallels to this key phrase.

50 See note 13 *supra*. Within its general architecture the speech includes a lengthy encomiastic section followed by some shorter deliberative advice. See Seck 1973, who usefully sets out a structure on page 367. On the basis of mentions in ancient sources, Cristina Pepe argues that the speech was in its day understood as primarily deliberative (2013, 330–2).

51 Cf. sections 22–25. For the topics conventional in encomia, see Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 7; Priscian, *Praeex.*7; Doxopater (Wal 2.423ff.); Quintilian, *Instit. Orat.* 3.7.10–25; al. For the significance of autochthony in particular for encomia, Arist. *Rh.* 1.5 1360b30–3.

52 Robinson's first edition for unclear reasons omitted an interpretation of the *Parmenides* that had been written for inclusion in the book, but was published instead in *Classical Philology* the following year. Although its absence—mentioned in the preface of 1941—had been remarked upon by reviewers, its slightly modified inclusion in the second edition marked no change on the author's part, whose view remained that the *Parmenides* employed hypothesis, but in a way betraying disappointment at the "hopes" of the middle dialogues. Amplifications to the chapter in 1953 elaborated somewhat by pointing to "departures" from the understanding found in the *Republic*, but the overall view remained the now familiar one that the *Meno* and *Parmenides*, while exhibiting hypothetical methods, are transitional cases—one to and the other from—Plato's middle-period. Cf. 1941, v with 1953, vii; also 1942, 51 and 1942, 180 with 1953, 223 and 278–80. Why the *Symposium* exhibits no such discussion we are in both editions left to wonder; but see Robinson 1941, 214–16 (1953, 202–5), where it suddenly emerges that analogy and imagery are Plato's chief means to persuasion even in his middle dialogues.

53 See 125d5f. and cf. Burnet 1914, 132–3. For positions of the kind that Zeno and Melissus developed mentioned among a variety of "odd and paradoxical" rhetorical hypotheses, see Isocrates 10.1–3.

54 On A. E. Taylor's (1934) alternative way of differentiating the two, (in id. 1934, q.v.), see Cornford 1939, 116n2.

55 While arguing that Xenophon deliberately assigns faulty argumentation to his Socrates, William Altman holds that "… the beauty of Xenophon's decision to use the word (sc. *hypothesis*) only once is that the very fact that it is underdetermined forces the reader—especially those who are going to become *dialektikōtéroi* and *hēgemonikōtátoi*—to think for themselves, and grasp on their own that since every discourse has its hypotheses, their nature necessarily depends on the specific argument in question." (2018, 123)

56 Norman Gulley's account (1968, 49–62) is a useful corrective to Robinson's side-lining of these. Curzio Chiesa (2011) fails to escape the orbit of Vlastos 1991.

57 See Lutoslawski 1897, 203; Tuckey 1951, 19; Tuozzo 2001, 158n6; and Moore and Raymond 2019, 57–60.
58 159a9–161b2.
59 161b3–163e3. These elements—taking over for a previous interlocutor, recalling a more authoritative formulation of his view, and having this version in turn modified dialectically—recur in another exchange taking place between Polemarchus and Socrates in the *Republic*, when the former takes over for his father in the middle of an argument by appealing to something the poet Simonides has said, which is then found to be a riddle (αἴνιγμα) requiring interpretation. Cf. *Republic* 331d2–332c4.
60 163e4–169d5. For the suspension of the question of possibility in favor of that of benefit at 169a1–d5, compare the similar move in *Republic* 5 when Socrates asks to be allowed to assume the possibility of the just city for a while in order that he may argue, based upon this assumption, that it is furthermore desirable (cited in note 25 *supra*).
61 169d5–172a9.
62 172b1–175a8.
63 As often, νῦν δέ signals a denial of the protasis of a preceding conditional statement, often left to be understood by way of an ellipse (here indicated by the next statement's being introduced with γάρ). For other examples of the idiom, see Xenophon, *An.* 5.1.10, *R.* 1 328d1–2 (comparing Lysias 13.90), *Lg.* 891b2–4, and Aristophanes, *Equites* 1276–1279.
64 Cf. Burnet 1914, 132–3, which compares the practice of Euclid. Socrates refers to their positing of hypotheses as "agreeing and fashioning together" (συνομολογοῦντες καὶ συμπλάττοντες 175d3); cf. *Republic* 510d5–511a2.
65 Cf. *Euthyphr.* 10e9–11b1 with 11b9–c6; *Parm.* 127e1–8 with 136d4–e4; and *R.* 1. 328c6–d6 with 6. 510b6–511d6 and 7. 533c7–d4. Exploring this mimetic dimension of Plato's use of dialectical argumentation in his philosophical dramas is a project of sufficient scope to warrant closer, separate study.
66 On the several ancient uses of which see Zimmermann 1996.
67 See Klein 1965, 7–10.

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2 The Dialectician and the Statesman in Plato's *Euthydemus*

Emily A. Austin

Plato's *Euthydemus* resists easy characterization, both thematically and methodologically. The dialogue's starring figures do ostensibly share a central project—convincing Clinias, a young cousin of Alcibiades, to "love wisdom and have a care for virtue" (274e8–275a22).[1] The relationship between that aim and much of what actually occurs, however, is a genuine source of puzzlement. Socrates initially entrusts the discussion to Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, two brothers who are in town peddling a new "eristic" art that enables its practitioners to defend any claim, no matter how false, paradoxical, or absurd (272b). Many of their arguments seem little more than slap-stick efforts to bumfuzzle their interlocutors. Socrates compares them to comedians who invite someone to sit down, only to pull the chair out from under their victim at the last second (278b). Teaching someone to use clownish arguments in defense of falsehoods is at best an uncommon strategy for making someone "love wisdom and have a care for virtue." Nevertheless, Socrates consistently marvels at the brothers' skills and announces his own eagerness to study with them. He even encourages his good friend Crito to enroll his sons (272b–d, 301e, 304b–c).[2] Socrates does, however, twice wrest the conversation from the brothers to demonstrate how *he* would lead Clinias to love wisdom and virtue. Socrates' efforts are commonly called 'protreptics,' while the brothers lead the 'eristics.' Between the opening and closing frame, the dialogue's progression is: eristic-protreptic-eristic-protreptic-eristic.

Scholars tend to focus solely on the protreptics, often for good reason. The protreptics star Socrates and seem reasonably aligned with the aim of making Clinias care about virtue, while the eristics regularly devolve into absurdity. The third eristic, for example, contains an argument that if you can beat your dog, then you can beat your father. If the dog is both "yours" and "a father," then it is "your father," and if you beat "your dog," then you can beat "your father" (298d–e).[3] The protreptics, by contrast, inform our understanding of Socrates' views about wisdom and happiness, so they have justly inspired a wealth of scholarship. Though the eristics comprise the bulk of the dialogue, they rarely, if ever, feature

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in discussions of the protreptics. Scholars generally write them off as ridiculous sophistry that Socrates praises ironically.[4]

While this interpretive strategy often comes with little cost, I contend that it has led scholars to overlook a candidate solution in the third eristic to the *aporia* of Socrates' second protreptic. Scholars maintain that Socrates' *aporia* remains unresolved until the *Republic*, but I contend that Socrates generates a response to his own puzzle in conversation with the brothers. At the opening of the second protreptic, Clinias and Socrates consider what kind of knowledge a philosopher must acquire in order to achieve happiness (288d). After dismissing a few unpromising candidates, Clinias and Socrates move higher up the intellectual food chain to the statesman and the dialectician. They focus on the statesman, but then find themselves unable to specify what kind of knowledge a statesman acquires. The Socrates of the *Republic* resolves this puzzle—the philosopher employs dialectic to acquire knowledge of the Form of the Good, which then enables him to rule the city.[5] In this chapter, I show that we need not hunt for a solution in the *Republic* because the *Euthydemus* contains within itself a resolution that is interesting in its own right.

In the next sections, I explore how and why the second protreptic ends in puzzlement. While many scholars have argued that the argument results in a regress, I argue that the confusion arises on two fronts.[6] First, Socrates and Clinias cannot settle on a suitable object of knowledge for the statesman because their previous agreements compel them to believe the statesman's knowledge must be reflexive. A knowledge that is knowledge of itself, however, is uninformative, impossible, or practically useless. Second, they cannot see how the statesman produces happiness in others except by transmitting his own knowledge through teaching, but the statesman as teacher is inconsistent with their view of the characteristic activity of a statesman.

I then show how the remainder of the dialogue offers solutions to these two puzzles. In the third eristic, Socrates commits himself to the existence of a Form of the Beautiful that, while separate, is also present with the many beautiful things as the source of their beauty (300e–301c). In the dialogue's closing passage, Socrates suggests to Crito that the philosopher and the statesman might share the same object of knowledge. I contend that, taken together, these passages suggest a resolution to the puzzle of the second protreptic—the philosopher acquires knowledge of the Form of the Beautiful, possibly through the dialectic Clinias briefly introduces in the second protreptic. Under appropriate circumstances, the philosopher who has acquired this knowledge uses that same knowledge as a statesman to set the city in order. The *Euthydemus*, I argue, calls attention to the need for a special object of wisdom, introduces a suitable object, and makes clear that the philosopher who acquires that knowledge is necessarily the same person able to genuinely benefit the city. A merit of

my account is that it suggests at least one way a notoriously disjointed dialogue might hang together as a whole.

The Path to an Impasse

Socrates and Clinias enter the second protreptic with a set of shared commitments from the first protreptic, including:

1) Happiness requires using possessions and talents rightly (280e).
2) Only wise people know how to use possessions and talents rightly (281b).
3) Thus, only the wise are happy.[7]
4) Without wisdom, possessions and talents actually harm their possessor (281b–d).
5) Wisdom can be taught (282c–d).

Since everyone wants to be happy, Socrates and Clinias agree that we should find a wise teacher who can empower us to use our possessions and talents rightly. Absent such instruction, we should prefer to be poor, talentless, and weak.[8] While the first four claims result in some fashion from shared argumentation, Clinias simply stipulates that wisdom can be taught.

In the second protreptic, though, Socrates introduces a new line of inquiry. He and Clinias agree that "philosophy is the acquisition of knowledge" (Ἡ δέ γε φιλοσοφία κτῆσις ἐπιστήμης, 288d8).[9] Yet Socrates says they have not specified what "sort of knowledge" they should acquire, only that it is "one which will benefit us" (ταύτην ἥτις ἡμᾶς ὀνήσει, 288e1–2). What kind of knowledge should they seek, and what sort of person has it?

Socrates reminds Clinias that we receive no benefit from acquiring knowledge of how to discover or produce something without the accompanying knowledge of its right use. We gain nothing from knowing how to discover gold or make humans immortal without knowledge of how to use gold or immortality (288e–289b). In fact, their earlier arguments showed that "acquisitive knowledge" without what we might call "use knowledge" actually harms us. Better not to have acquisitive knowledge at all (281d). Thus, if any acquisitive knowledge is in itself beneficial, it must necessarily ensure its own right use. Socrates formalizes this point by setting a requirement on the knowledge they seek:

> The Make/Use Requirement: philosophers should acquire "a kind of knowledge which combines making and knowing how to use the thing which it makes".
>
> (289b4–6)

The remainder of the second protreptic records their search for the kind of knowledge that satisfies the 'Make/Use Requirement.' Socrates' examples begin, as they often do, with forms of craft knowledge governing the production and use of artifacts. For example, there are two different arts with respect to lyres—making a lyre and playing a lyre (289c). Socrates surely cannot mean that it is impossible for one person to possesses both the art of lyre-making and the art of lyre-playing. His point is that the two crafts can be, and often are, possessed apart. Lyre-makers are usually competent, though not excellent, lyre-players; most players cannot make a lyre at all, much less an excellent one. Clinias says the same is true of speech-making. Someone who writes an effective speech often proves unable to deliver it effectively, while someone good at delivering speeches might prove unable to write one worth delivering (289c–d).[10] Again, one person might possess and even teach both arts, but the two arts come apart despite sharing an object (e.g., lyres, speeches for the assembly). Because the two arts come apart, neither lyre-making nor lyre-using can satisfy the 'Make/Use Requirement' and be the "one which will benefit us" (288e1–2).

Socrates then considers whether perhaps they should acquire the art of generalship. In response, Clinias characterizes the general's acquisitive art as a kind of "hunting." He rejects generalship because it is only "a kind of man-hunting" (Θηρευτική τις ἀνθρώπων, 290b5). Once the general has captured his prey, he turns it over to someone who knows how to use it. Just as the game-hunter turns a rabbit over to the cook, the general turns a conquered city over to statesmen. Generalship, then, knows how to acquire through hunting, but not how to use its game. Here again the acquisitive art provides no benefit without the separate knowledge of its use.

The most striking feature of Clinias' account of "hunting" is his shift from man-hunting and game-hunting to the hunt for abstract mathematical objects. Clinias claims that geometers, astronomers, and mathematicians also "hunt," but they, like the generals, turn over what they find to someone else. These mathematicians, he says, do not "make their diagrams; they simply discover the things that are" (οὐ γὰρ ποιοῦσι τὰ διαγράμματα ἕκαστοι τούτων, ἀλλὰ τὰ ὄντα ἀνευρίσκουσιν, 290c2–3).[11] In other words, their craft is not production, but discovery. Having made their discoveries, the ones who are not "completely senseless" (παντάπασιν ἀνόητοί) turn their findings over to those who know how to use them—the dialecticians (290c5–6).

This lone and unexpected appearance of the dialectician has received scant attention, despite sticking out like a rusty nail in the floorboard. One might reasonably think that the paucity of evidence about dialectic in the *Euthydemus* permits little better than a speculative account of the dialectician who briefly features in the second protreptic. Nevertheless, the question of method is so central to a general understanding of the dialogue itself and its relation to other dialogues that this isolated reference deserves scrutiny.

One plausible and common approach to dialectic in the *Euthydemus* casts Socrates as its proper practitioner, when "dialectic" is understood as Socrates' emblematic exercise of motivating others to seek knowledge they lack.[12] Plato uses the dialogue to set Socrates' dialectical method in stark contrast to the brother's eristic, which showcases dialectic gone comically bad. Such an account of dialectic is admirably parsimonious—the brothers fail at dialectic, whereas Socrates masterfully exercises it. When Clinias invokes the dialectician in the second protreptic, then, he does not signal a new conception of dialectic, at least not as a distinctively philosophical enterprise necessary to achieve an understanding of the unconditional good.

I think we are better served, however, complicating that parsimonious account, either by denying that Socrates engages in dialectic or by acknowledging that at least two conceptions of philosophical dialectic are in play. Clinias' dialectic bears a noticeable family resemblance to the dialectic of the *Republic*.[13] Clinias depicts an upward progression from geometers to dialecticians on par with the upward progression from generals to their superiors, the statesmen. In the *Republic*, the dialectician likewise uses the abstract objects geometry provides, not as first principles, but as hypotheses in the search for the unhypothetical first principle (*R.* 6: 511c–d). Once the dialectician acquires this knowledge of the Form of the Good, he is qualified to rule. I will suggest below that Socrates' introduction of a Form of the Beautiful in the *Euthydemus* might play a similar role in bridging the philosopher and the statesman. By contrast, we have no reason to think that Socrates takes his philosophical project in the *Euthydemus* to bear any direct relationship to the work of the geometers, much less to depend on their contributions. If Socrates is a dialectician, he practices a different variety.

Instead of taking up the question of what knowledge the dialectician acquires, though, Socrates and Clinias continue with the statesman.[14] They agree that the statesman is the likely cause of civic happiness, but they run into difficulties determining what knowledge he both acquires and uses. He cannot simply use the spoils of war from the general or the material goods produced by the craftsmen. He must acquire a kind of knowledge distinctive of statesmanship that necessarily includes knowledge of its proper use. Otherwise, no "acquisitive" knowledge ever in itself benefits us. Socrates claims that philosophy is an "acquisitive" knowledge, so it would mean that philosophy is of no benefit (288d). If philosophy provides no benefit, though, then Socrates' central aim to convince Clinias to pursue philosophy would fail.

Crito reasserts himself into Socrates' narrative at this point. He expresses admiration for Clinias' discussion of the dialectician and the statesman, and he wonders whether Clinias needs any education from the brothers "or anyone else" (οὔτε ἄλλου οὐδενὸς, 290e5). Perhaps, he and Socrates speculate, something divine spoke through Clinias (291a3–7).

Crito then asks whether Socrates and Clinias finally identified the knowledge they sought. Socrates replies: "I should think not!" (291b).

Rejecting the Art of Ruling

Socrates initially expresses optimism about statesmanship. He thinks statesmanship is "the cause of right action in the state and, to use the language of Aeschylus, that this art alone sits at the helm of the state, governing all things, ruling all things, and making all things useful" (291c10–d3).[15] Ruling must, Socrates says, "produce some result for us" (291d7–e1). Given their earlier agreement that possessions only benefit us when used wisely, the commonsense benefits of good rule, including "making the citizens rich and free and not disturbed by faction," are "neither good nor evil" (292b5–7). In fact, it is better to not have those things without wisdom (281b–d). If the statesman "makes all things useful" and produces happiness in the city, then he must either make the people themselves wise, or he must produce happiness through some other means.

Socrates endorses the former, claiming that the statesman must "make them wise and provide them with a share of knowledge" (ἔδει δὲ σοφοὺς ποιεῖν καὶ ἐπιστήμης μεταδιδόναι, 292b7–c1). Socrates asks Crito whether he thinks true statesmanship "makes people wise and good?" (σοφοὺς ποιεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἀγαθούς, 292c4–5), and Crito has no reservations. In his words, "Why not?" Socrates has good reason to support this conception of the statesman, as he and Clinias have already agreed that the unwise cannot be happy. If the people are happy, then they must possess wisdom. Yet they still cannot specify what kind knowledge the statesman acquires in the first place.

Socrates reports that he and Clinias reached an impasse at this point, but the reason for their impasse is not entirely clear. The relevant stretch of text is as follows:

S: Then what knowledge does it convey? And what use are we to make of it? It must not be the producer of any of those results which are neither good nor bad, but it must convey a knowledge that is none other than itself (ἐπιστήμην δὲ παραδιδόναι μηδεμίαν ἄλλην ἢ αὐτὴν ἑαυτήν). Now shall we try to say what in the world this is, and what use we are to make of it? Is it agreeable to you if we say it is that by which we shall make others good?

C: Certainly.

S: And in what respect will they be good and in what respect useful, as far as we are concerned? Or shall we say that they will make others good and that these others will do the same to still others (ἢ ἔτι λέγωμεν ὅτι ἄλλους ποιήσουσιν, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι ἐκεῖνοι ἄλλους)? But in what conceivable way they are good is in no way apparent to us, especially since

> we have discredited what are said to be the benefits of the statesman's art. It is altogether a case of the proverbial 'Corinthus, son of Zeus'. (292d1–e3)

Scholars generally argue that the argument terminates in a regress, though the nature of the regress remains unclear, including whether the regress goes backwards or forwards.[16] Some also contend that Socrates relies on a misguided craft analogy that requires that all knowledge has a product.[17] On this interpretation, the reader should see cracks in the craft analogy that motivate Plato to abandon it in other dialogues like the *Republic*.[18]

I suggest a different interpretation that avoids these difficulties and permits a resolution within the *Euthydemus* itself. On my reading, Socrates and Clinias run into two problems. First, they worry that the statesman's art lacks a "special object," not that it lacks a "product." Socrates thinks all kinds of knowledge are *of* something distinctive, but their earlier commitments seem to require that wisdom take itself as its own object. If wisdom is the only unconditional good, and wisdom must be of something unconditionally good, then wisdom must be of itself. That result seems uninformative, perhaps even incoherent. Second, Socrates worries that if wisdom is teachable, as Socrates and Clinias assumed, then a city would not need a continuous ruler. The city's members, once made wise, could transmit wisdom to each another without ongoing assistance from the ruler. On the other hand, if wisdom cannot be transmitted through teaching, then the people would lack the wisdom required for personal happiness and the statesman would not be the source of happiness in the city. In the next section, I turn to the question of wisdom's special object, by way of the *Charmides*.

The Problem with Reflexive Knowledge

The *Charmides* offers a sustained account of how reflexive knowledge results in confusion. Socrates and Charmides seek a definition of temperance, and Charmides offers a series of definitions that Socrates dispatches quickly (and quite sophistically).[19] Critias steps in to relieve Charmides and to defend his own definition of temperance as "minding one's own business" (161b6). Under Socratic scrutiny, Critias insists that his definition requires "knowing oneself," understood as "knowing what one knows and does not know" (*Chrm.* 164c–165a).[20] Socrates then asks Critias to name the object and product of this self-knowledge, since Socrates thinks all kinds of knowledge must be "of something" and produce something. Medicine is "of health" and produces health. Similarly, house-building is "of building houses" and produces houses (*Chrm.* 165c4–e2). Critias objects that some kinds of knowledge do not produce anything, offering

calculation and geometry as examples (*Chrm.* 165e3–166a2). Socrates responds, though, that even calculation and geometry have a separate object of knowledge. Calculation is of the "odd and even," which are separate from the art of calculation; weighing is of the "heavier and lighter," which are separate from the art of weighing (*Chrm.* 166a3–7). That calculation does not have a product does not mean that it lacks a separate object. As in the *Euthydemus*, Socrates countenances arts that take abstractions as special objects.

Critias insists that his version of self-knowledge is "the only science which is both of the other sciences and of itself" (ὅτι μόνη τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν αὐτή τε αὑτῆς ἐστιν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν ἐπιστήμη, *Chrm.* 166c5–6). Socrates then structures the inquiry into this "knowledge of itself and other knowledges" around two questions: is such knowledge possible, and if so, does it produce happiness in the city. These are, I contend, the same two worries that drive the *aporia* of the second protreptic.[21]

Socrates first asks whether knowledge that takes itself as its own object even makes sense. Reflexive sensory powers seem bizarre. How, for example, can a person see without a separate and suitable object of perception like a tree? How can something directly see itself (*Chrm.* 167c–d)?[22] Reflexive powers of desire, wish, love, fear, and opinion seem similarly bizarre (*Chrm.* 167e–168a). How can a person desire without a separate object of desire? Non-psychological powers like a motion that moves itself or a heat that burns itself are just as perplexing (*Chrm.* 168e9–10). Relational powers, on the other hand, are not merely difficult to make sense of—they rule out reflexivity entirely. That one and the same thing is greater than itself or double itself is "absolutely impossible" (παντάπασιν ἀδύνατον, *Chrm.* 168e6). In sum, some reflexive powers seem bizarre, others impossible, so Socrates finds himself perplexed. Perhaps some "great man" could "give an adequate explanation of this point," but he cannot (169a). Critias concedes that he can offer no assistance (169c).[23]

Turning back to the *Euthydemus*, I think Socrates and Clinias encounter the same difficulty. Socrates wonders what philosophy must "discover" or "acquire" that also ensures proper use. He and Clinias agree that wisdom is the only unconditional good, so philosophy must acquire wisdom. But if wisdom itself is the only unconditional good, and it must be of an unconditional good, then it can only be of itself. As Socrates put it, "it must convey a knowledge that is none other than itself" (ἐπιστήμην δὲ παραδιδόναι μηδεμίαν ἄλλην ἢ αὐτὴν ἑαυτήν, 292d3–4). A knowledge that discovers and conveys itself, however, is puzzling or perhaps impossible. Knowledge traditionally takes something separate and prior as its object.

I contend, then, that Socrates' first worry about statesmanship in the *Euthydemus* is not about how the relevant knowledge is used. It concerns the special object of wisdom, the thing one acquires knowledge *of* and how one acquires it. While that special object is missing from the *Charmides*, I contend that it makes an appearance in the *Euthydemus*.[24]

Knowledge of "The Beautiful Itself"

Socrates himself proposes a candidate for the special object of wisdom pages later in an exchange with Dionysodorus. Ctesippus, an admirer of Clinias and a quick-study of eristic, has just employed a clever argument to unseat the brothers. When Clinias laughs, Socrates asks why he is laughing "at such serious and beautiful things" (σπουδαίοις οὕτω πράγμασιν καὶ καλοῖς, 300e1-2). Dionysodorus responds to Socrates' remark with a new line of argumentation. He asks Socrates whether he has actually ever seen a "beautiful thing" (καλὸν πρᾶγμα, 300e3). Socrates reports that he has not only seen a beautiful thing, but "many" (πολλά) beautiful things (300e5). The discussion continues:

> And were they different from the beautiful, he asked, or were they the same as the beautiful?
>
> (Ἆρα ἕτερα ὄντα τοῦ καλοῦ, ἔφη, ἢ ταὐτὰ τῷ καλῷ)

> This put me in a terrible fix, which I thought I deserved for my grumbling. All the same, I answered that they were different from the beautiful itself, but at the same time there was some beauty present with each of them.
>
> (ὅμως δὲ ἕτερα ἔφην αὐτοῦ γε τοῦ καλοῦ· πάρεστιν μέντοι ἑκάστῳ αὐτῶν κάλλος τι, 301a1–4)

Dionysodorus, incredulous, asks how the mere presence of something (X) can transform another thing (Y) into the first thing (X). Does the presence of an ox with Socrates make Socrates an ox? Or the presence of Bob Dylan make someone else Bob Dylan? Why, Dionysodorus wonders, is it not equally absurd that the presence of the Beautiful transforms things "different" from the Beautiful into beautiful things. In his words, how "can the different be different just because the different is present with the different."

In response, Socrates asks Dionysodorus whether he agrees that the "beautiful is beautiful" and the "ugly is ugly" (οὐ τὸ καλὸν καλόν ἐστιν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν αἰσχρόν, 301b5–6).[25] Dionysodorus agrees for the sake of argument, and Socrates replies that "even a child would hardly doubt" that the different must be different just as the beautiful is beautiful.[26]

Socrates' exchange with Dionysodorus appears to contain three of the common features of a Platonic account of the Forms: separation of the Forms from the particulars, a participation relation between Forms and particulars, and some sort of self-predication.[27] I will focus on the first two features, separation and the relationship between the Form and the particulars, setting aside self-predication. Socrates introduces a separate object (the beautiful itself) that participates in the particulars (beautiful

things). Remember that Socrates and Clinias seek a special object that, once known, ensures right use of various civic particulars. The Form of the Beautiful meets the key criteria. Granted, Socrates does not explicitly draw the connection between the *aporia* of the second protreptic and his later introduction of the Beautiful. A reader, though, can trace connections in the *Euthydemus* that are made explicit elsewhere, in the *Symposium* as the "Beautiful Itself" and in the *Republic* as the "Form of the Good." In all of these cases, knowledge of the relevant form allows the person to use it, whether to "give birth" in beauty or to put the city in order.[28]

The stipulation of a suitable object of knowledge, though, only establishes what wisdom "acquires." It does not show how the wise person uses it to make the city happy. In the next section, then, I consider how one puts knowledge of something like the Form of the Beautiful to use for the benefit of others. The core difficulty, I suggest, concerns wisdom's transmissibility. If wisdom is not readily transmissible, then the ruler cannot provide happiness, at least on the first protreptic's assumption that happiness requires wisdom. If, on the other hand, it is transmissible, the ruler becomes superfluous and would not need to sit "at the helm of the state." As Socrates puts it, the ruler "will make others good" and "these others will do the same to still others" (292d–e). The ruler would be a first cause, but not a sustaining cause. The city would be populated with self-rulers.

The Teachability of Wisdom and The Unnecessary Ruler

In the first protreptic, Socrates convinces Clinias to pursue wisdom by seeking virtually anyone who can "give him some wisdom" (282b), but he then notes that they have not actually established whether wisdom can be taught. Instead, it might "come to men of its own accord" (ἀπὸ ταὐτομάτου παραγίγνεται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, 282c2–3). Clinias responds: "As far as I'm concerned, it can be taught" (282c4–5). Socrates does not usually let things go without argument, but he does in this instance, happy to set the question aside. He thanks Clinias for sparing him a "long investigation of this very point, whether or not wisdom can be taught" (282c6–8).

Whether virtue is teachable is a central question in the *Protagoras* and the *Meno*, but it is never directly taken up in the *Euthydemus*. Related questions do, however, feature repeatedly in the eristics. In the first eristic, the brothers ask Clinias whether the wise or ignorant learn and whether the wise learn what they already know or what they don't know (275d–277c). They argue for both options, leaving Clinias at a loss. Socrates admonishes Clinias for falling prey to a linguistic sleight of hand. The brothers, Socrates claims, have used "learn" to describe both the "acquisition" and "use" of knowledge (277d–279b). When we use

knowledge, we "learn" what we already know, but when we acquire, we learn what we did not already know.[29]

Recall that in the second protreptic, Crito marvels at Clinias' subtle discussion of the varieties of "hunting." Though Clinias was flat-footed in the first eristic, he comes into his own as the dialogue progresses. Crito claims that "if [Clinias] spoke like that, he needs no education, either from Euthydemus or anyone else" (290e5–6). Clinias appears to be in some sense teaching himself, perhaps discovering his own knowledge.

The relationship between teaching and learning also serves as a transition from the second protreptic to the final eristic, where the brothers introduce something resembling Plato's Theory of Recollection as reflected in a funhouse mirror.[30] Socrates calls on the brothers to save him from the frustrating impasse. They insist that Socrates knows the answer because he already knows and has always known everything, even before he was born (293b–295a). If the brothers are correct that we all know everything, even if we are not currently aware of our knowledge, then a teacher never transmits new knowledge. Instead, teachers provide the right circumstances for us to discover what we already know. Though Socrates never directly challenges wisdom's teachability with Clinias, the question is threaded throughout the dialogue from the first to the final eristic.

I suggest that Socrates remains concerned in the second protreptic about to what extent a ruler can transmit wisdom. One possibility, as mentioned above, is that the ruler initiates a chain of complete, direct transmission (292d8–9). If so, the ruler simply sets the ball rolling, since each person can successively make others wise by teaching. The ruler would effectively end the need for a ruler, at least on the understanding that ruling is the ongoing activity of a superior individual.[31] Perhaps Socrates is happy to abandon this conception of ruling in the event of universal transmission. If Socrates remains uncertain that wisdom is transmissible to all and by all, though, he must explain how ruling produces happiness without providing wisdom.[32]

An available middle ground is that wisdom comes in degrees. Perhaps all or most people can attain some degree of wisdom that makes possible a corresponding degree of happiness. If so, the ruler would produce as much wisdom and happiness as he can under the circumstances. Some rare individuals would achieve full wisdom, making them eligible to serve as rulers themselves, but the vast majority would fall short of complete wisdom. Ensuring the conditions for imperfect wisdom and happiness would require the statesman's ongoing effort. As such, the ruler would remain at the helm, governing as a superior individual. Scholars have suggested that the philosopher-ruler of the *Republic* might similarly afford some happiness to the non-ruling classes by maintaining the city's structure and educational program.[33]

Does Socrates, though, give any indication in the *Euthydemus* that wisdom and happiness might come in degrees? Some commentators, stretching at least as far back as the Stoics, have argued that Socrates thinks wisdom and happiness are all or nothing in the first protreptic. A few passages suggest otherwise. Recall that Socrates encourages Clinias to seek wisdom from whomever has any to offer. Clinias should, Socrates says, beseech people to "give him some wisdom" (σοφίας μεταδιδόναι, 282a7–b3). In that way, he can become "as wise as possible" (ὅπως ὡς σοφώτατος ἔσται, 282a6). Wisdom is the sort of thing of which one can get "some." That one becomes as wise "as possible" does not require that one achieve complete wisdom. Socrates uses the same verb later to suggest that the statesman might provide a "share" (μεταδιδόναι, 292b8) of wisdom to others. The text, then, indicates that Socrates take seriously the possibility of degreed wisdom.

Treating wisdom as all-or-nothing also comes at the cost of some uncomfortable philosophical entailments. Specifically, if complete wisdom were necessary for happiness, then Socrates could not ascribe any happiness to himself or others, since Socrates consistently denies possessing wisdom, and he never reports finding it in anyone else.[34] He also could not judge one city happier than any other. Yet he does occasionally call himself happy (*Grg.* 527c), and he thinks some people are happier than others, depending on their relationship to virtue. He even claims to make others happy, if only by showing them they should not consider themselves wise (*Ap.* 36d–e). Taking wisdom as degreed, then, would not consign everyone short of full wisdom to complete unhappiness. In the *Republic*, Socrates and Glaucon are content to let even the philosopher fall short of perfection, settling for a life better than any other (*R.* 5: 472b–d).

I have so far argued that Socrates recognizes two problems with the ruling craft in the second protreptic. First, their conclusions from the first protreptic leave Socrates and Clinias without a suitable object for wisdom other than wisdom itself. Reflexive knowledge, though, is bizarre or impossible. Socrates resolves this worry when he introduces a suitable object—the Beautiful itself. Second, Socrates worries that a wise person will not need to rule or will not produce happiness in the city. He will either not be a statesman or not produce happiness. If, however, only the wise person can ensure degrees of wisdom and happiness, then he would be a ruler who plays a special, ongoing role in making that possible. The *Euthydemus* itself suggests this possibility, and it is consistent with Socrates' claims about happiness elsewhere.

In the next and final section, I turn to Socrates' closing discussion with Crito about the comparative goods of politics and philosophy. The point of the first protreptic was that a person must acquire wisdom to be happy and that philosophy is the means for achieving it (288d). The second protreptic, as scholars have noted, turns abruptly to the statesman's role in producing political happiness.[35] It is unclear, though, whether the

individual philosopher who achieves wisdom is the same as the statesman. The "Make/Use Principle" requires that the person who acquires the art they seek must of necessity know how to use what he acquires to produce happiness. Why not think, though, that the philosopher merely acquires a knowledge that he uses to produce happiness for himself, not for others?

I contend that Socrates' closing discussion with Crito indicates that successful philosophy and politics are activities of one person, at least if politics benefits. The philosopher acquires knowledge of the only unconditional good, perhaps, I have suggested, as the end result of dialectical activity akin to that of the *Republic*. Under the right circumstances, the philosopher then uses that knowledge in the political sphere to produce happiness for others. Philosophy comes first, since acquisition is prior to use. But if politics benefits others, then the philosopher must be the one to practice it because only the philosopher knows the unconditional good.

The "No-Man's Land" Between Philosophy and Politics

After Socrates concludes his account with ringing praise for the brothers, Crito confesses that he would rather not practice eristic (304d). Though he feels "ridiculous" giving Socrates advice, he recounts a conversation with an unnamed stranger who witnessed the brothers' display.[36] The stranger tells Crito that Socrates should be ashamed to be seen engaging with such "worthless and ridiculous" men (φαῦλοί εἰσιν καὶ καταγέλαστοι, 305a7–8). Philosophy, at least practiced their way, "is of no value whatsoever" (οὐδενὸς μὲν οὖν ἄξιον, 305a1). Crito does not consider philosophy worthless, but he admits to Socrates that "to argue with such people in front of a large crowd does seem worthy of reproach" (305b1–3).

Socrates disagrees, in effect coming to his own defense. Crito confirms that the stranger practices neither politics nor philosophy, when "practices" means engaging in those activities in the public sphere. Instead, the stranger is a behind-the-scenes political operative who also considers himself "pretty well up in philosophy" (305d8–e1). His role on the margins helps him avoid "risk and contest" (κινδύνων καὶ ἀγώνων), thereby shielding himself from scrutiny and judgment.[37] Socrates says the stranger occupies what Prodicus calls the "no-man's land" (μεθόρια) between philosophy and politics, engaging fully in neither, yet having a reputation for both.

Socrates points out, though, that dabblers are inferior to specialists when the practice is valuable. If philosophy or politics is worthless, then being a dabbler is better than going all in. But if either or both activities are worthwhile, then the dabbler is inferior to the practitioner of the worthy art. The stranger, then, is only in the best position of the three if neither philosophy nor politics is valuable. However, "if philosophy is a good, and so is the activity of the statesman (and each has a different

end)," then the stranger is "inferior to both" (306a–b). In particular, he is "inferior to both with respect to the object for which either politics or philosophy is of value" (306c2–4). As an *ad hominem* point, Socrates speculates that the stranger would likely disagree that both, or even either, are bad. In that case, Socrates says, the stranger would be "in third place" (τρίτοι ὄντες), fancying himself the best (306c5).

The stranger's "third place" finish, though, gives rise to a puzzle. It suggests that there might be a rank ordering of the philosopher and the politician and that they might be different people who study different objects of differing value. Note, though, that the text itself leaves open the possibility that philosophy and politics share the same object. Socrates' suggestion that philosophy and politics could have different "aims" is nested in a conditional clause (i.e. *if* they have different ends). His claim about the stranger's inferiority "with respect to the object for which either politics or philosophy is of value" does not rule out that they are both valuable because they share the same object. They might share the same object, the philosopher in acquisition, the politician in use.

On my reading of the *Euthydemus*, then, philosophy is the only activity that "acquires" knowledge of something unconditionally good that in itself ensures right use of that good thing. The 'Make/Use Requirement' ties the beneficial acquisition and the beneficial use of wisdom together inextricably. If the politician does in fact use wisdom to make the citizens happy, then the philosopher and the politician must be the same person. The philosopher acquires knowledge of the Form of the Beautiful, and the politician uses that same knowledge to benefit others. The unnamed stranger ranks third because the philosopher and the statesman are tied for first. In the end, we need not look to the *Republic* to discover that the philosopher and the statesman are the same person. The *Euthydemus*, when the dots are connected, offers its own fascinating account of why that must be the case.

Notes

1 Stephanus references are to Burnet OCT (1900–1907). Translations are from Cooper 1997 unless otherwise noted.
2 The fact that Socrates encourages Crito to enroll his sons with the brothers suggests that he earnestly believes the brothers offer some genuine educational benefit. Otherwise, Socrates encourages his good friend to harm his own sons. David Corey (2015, 275n13) recognizes this concern, though he dismisses it as irony. Austin 2020 takes it seriously.
3 Cp. Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, where study with Socrates leads Pheidippides to beat his father. Socrates' apparent pleasure at such arguments in the *Euthydemus* might suggest some justification for Aristophanes' willingness to put similar arguments in the mouth of Socrates in a satirical context. It should go without saying that you should beat neither your dog nor your father.
4 Socrates accuses the brothers of not being entirely serious each time he takes over the discussion from them (278b–e, 288b–d), but he never denies that the topics under discussion are themselves serious or that Euthydemus and

Dionysodorus are fully capable of giving a serious display. For discussion of comedy and irony in the *Euthydemus*, see especially Semamoglou-Soulmadi 2014 and Michelini 2000. Roslyn Weiss (2000, 72–3) argues that Socrates, like the brothers, "plays to win." His play is "serious," but Weiss thinks Socrates' protreptic resembles the eristic of the brothers more than some readers might find comfortable. I am sympathetic to her point.

5 See Parry 2003 and Sprague 1976 for the argument that the puzzle is left unresolved until the *Republic*.

6 Hawtrey 1981, 138, Annas 1993, 63, Sprague 1976, 54, and McCabe 1998 all agree that the argument ends in a regress, though they disagree about the cause of the regress, including whether it extends backwards or forwards.

7 There is a substantial literature on whether Socrates supports the more modest view that wisdom is necessary for happiness ("only the wise are happy") or the more austere view that wisdom is both necessary and sufficient for happiness ("all and only the wise are happy"). My interpretation does not depend on arbitrating that dispute, so here I maintain only the modest view, with some sympathy for the austere view. Jones 2013a provides a helpful survey of the literature on the question, as well as a defense of the view that Socrates thinks wisdom is necessary, but not sufficient for happiness. See Bobonich 2002, Brown unpublished, Rider 2012 and Russell 2005 for competing interpretations.

8 The inclusion of virtue terms like "courage" and "self-control" as conditionally good might initially seem surprising (281c). Dispositions to courageous action and self-control, though, can be harnessed to wicked aims. See Ferejohn 1984 for links between this point and the Unity of the Virtues Thesis.

9 Rosamond K. Sprague's translation altered to remove "love of wisdom."

10 This point about speech-writing plays out in the dramatic features of the *Euthydemus*. Socrates claims that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus taught both the art of composing and of using speeches before they began practicing eristic (272a). By comparison, the unnamed "stranger" who criticizes Socrates and the brothers merely produces speeches. In fact, the unnamed stranger has never "appeared in court" (305b–c).

11 Sprague's translation altered from "those which already exist" to "the things that are."

12 See esp. Christopher Gill's (2000) study for this reading of dialectic. Gill characterizes Socrates' mode of discussion in the first protreptic as dialectic: "the protreptic is carried out *through dialectic*" (137, his emphasis). Gill does not discuss the dialecticians of the second protreptic.

13 Hawtrey 1981, 127–9 offers a hesitant suggestion that this might be the same dialectician as in the *Republic*, a suggestion I endorse.

14 Though they take up the statesman, they are not necessarily forswearing discussion of the dialectician. In the *Statesman*, the Visitor and Young Socrates consider their inquiry into the statesman a means to "becoming better dialecticians" (285d).

15 The comparison of a ruler to the person who possesses the art of steering a ship plays a central role in the *Republic*. In the image of the "Ship of State," sailors untrained in navigation compete to captain the ship, resenting the "true navigator" amongst them. They claim that "the art of navigation is not teachable" and deny that there is "any craft that would enable [the true navigator] to determine how to steer the ship…or any possibility of mastering this alleged craft or of practicing it *at the same time* as the craft of navigation" (6: 488b–e, my emphasis). Note that these are two crafts concerned with navigation possessed by the same person who acquired the art of steering and uses

it to steer in real time. See also *Plt*. 301e–302b. In the *Statesman*, the ruling craft resembles "weaving" rather than sailing, though both the weaver and the navigator can discern what to do in a particular moment.

16 R. S. W. Hawtrey (1981, 138) says only that "at this point the investigation reached a regress." Julia Annas (1993, 63) says "but this of course starts an infinite regress," though she does not flesh out the nature of the regress; Sprague (1976, 54) seems to think the regress goes forward: "Plato envisages an unending chain of A making B good, B making C good, etc., without suggesting how the regress might be stopped." M. McCabe 1998 thinks it's a regress of justification in the quest to know that one knows something.

17 Annas 1993, Irwin 1995 and Sprague 1976; I agree with Richard Parry (2003) that Plato does not abandon the craft analogy, though space constrains a defense of that claim here.

18 Sprague (1976, 34–5) sees these hints in the *Charmides*. I concur and appeal to this point below.

19 See Santas 1979 and Sprague 1976 for charges of sophistry.

20 Benson 2003 and Kahn 1996 explore whether Socrates' eventual rejection of the possibility and benefit of Critias' proposal undercuts Socrates' own emblematic claim to know what he does not know and to benefit others by exposing their pretensions to knowledge.

21 Vasilis Politis (2008) rightly argues that the *aporia* of the *Charmides* (and I think also of the *Euthydemus*) is not the sort that ends a traditional definitional dialogue. Instead of a failure to discover a definition, the *Charmides*' *aporia* is "the puzzlement characteristic of the grasp of a particular problem…articulated in the question that [the] *aporia* is said to be about" (4). Politis' point is more striking in the context of the *Charmides*, as the dialogue begins as a search for a definition of temperance, but increases logarithmically in philosophical complexity when Critias takes over from Charmides.

22 Some readers, esp. Annas (1985) and Christopher Moore (2015), think a chief lesson of the discussion of "self-knowledge" in the *Charmides* is that "knowing oneself" requires a friend to serve as intermediary in the way that a mirror makes it possible to see one's physical person (cp. *Alcibiades* 132c). One cannot see oneself except as reflected in a friend. One might find similar thoughts expressed in Aristotle's *EN* 9.9.

23 Politis (2008, 33) argues that Socrates does not think reflexive knowledge is impossible, at least when reflexive knowledge requires not only *that* one knows something, but also knowledge of *what* one knows.

24 See the study by Thomas Tuozzo (2011, 326–331), who argues that the solution to the *aporia* of the *Charmides* is also a separate object, namely the *Republic's* Form of the Good. I contend that an important difference between the *Charmides* and the *Euthydemus* is that the latter has resources to solve the puzzle internal to the dialogue itself.

25 Following Sprague in translating τὸ αἰσχρὸν as "ugly," though these two terms could be rendered as "fine" and "shameful" or some other set of value-laden contraries.

26 Socrates makes a comparable appeal to what "even a child would know" in the first protreptic when he advances a similarly non-obvious claim—that "wisdom is surely good fortune" (279d).

27 Richard Mohr (1984) argues that Socrates introduces an account of Forms, though he does not weigh in on the passage's relation to other lines of inquiry in the *Euthydemus*. Hawtrey (1981, 173–5) claims that he is "reasonably confident that the present passage refers to the Theory of Forms as found in, say the *Phaedo*." Charles Kahn (2000, 93-94) notes the appearance of the

Theory of Forms in passing, referring to it as a "caricature." See also Sprague 1962, 55–56. Those scholars reticent to attribute metaphysical weight to the passage seem motivated, perhaps shackled, by methodology. Hawtrey, for example, wonders when noting the appearance of dialectic in the second protreptic what the "average reader" would think given that the *Republic* was "as yet unwritten," a claim we have no way to confirm (129).

28 Someone might reasonably worry that the relevant Form in the *Euthydemus* is the Beautiful Itself, whereas the Socrates of the *Republic* brings the Form of the Good to the fore. Granted, Socrates does say the Form of the Good is the most beautiful, but he does not identify the Beautiful Itself as supreme (*R.* 6: 508d–509a). The *Symposium*, as does the *Euthydemus*, awards pride of place to the Form of the Beautiful (*Smp.* 211d–212b). I do not here intend to suggest that any of these accounts are identical, only that the *Euthydemus* supplies a suitable object to play the role of bridging the gap between the philosopher and the statesman. I remain unconvinced that Plato himself had a firm account of the crowning Form. The Socrates of the *Phaedo* seems entirely indifferent to the question, appearing content to put the Beautiful, the Good, and the Just on equal footing (*Phd.* 75c–d).

29 This same dual sense of "learn" troubles Socrates and Theaetetus when they discuss the "aviary" in the *Theaetetus*. Socrates claims there are two senses of "hunting" that correspond with two kinds of learning. The first "hunting" is an effort to acquire some piece of knowledge, and the second to "catch and have in your hands what you previously acquired" (198d–199b). In the second eristic of the *Euthydemus*, the brothers argue that false judgments and mistakes are impossible (286c), claims that also stymie Socrates and Theaetetus.

30 McCabe (1998, 250–1) surveys these and other puzzles when exploring the Theory of Recollection in the *Euthydemus*. See also Austin 2020, 11–13.

31 The *Statesman* also features a ruler who oversees the city like a steersman, determining what is best at the moment, an art that cannot be captured by laws that permit no exceptions. However, when the statesman takes a vacation, he writes down laws that must be followed because only someone like himself knows when to alter them for the best (*Plt.* 295b–e). By the close of the dialogue, though, the statesman turns out to be more weaver than captain.

32 One can see how Socrates could get himself into this bind in other dialogues. He occasionally insists that a necessary condition on possessing knowledge of virtue is the ability to reliably transmit it (*La.* 186e–187b; *Grg.* 460a–e). That commitment, when iterated, would lead to universal transmission. Since everyone is not virtuous, Socrates would have reason to believe either that no one knows virtue or that virtue cannot be taught. Plato roundly rejects universal transmission elsewhere, especially in the *Republic*. See also the *Statesman* (292e, 301e).

33 See especially Kamtekar 1998 and Lear 1992. For further discussion of wisdom and happiness in the *Republic*, see the contribution by Vivil V. Haraldsen to this volume.

34 Russell Jones (2013b) argues that Socrates was not happy because he did not possess wisdom. Nicholas Smith (2016) disagrees.

35 Annas (1993) frames her paper around the shift from "wisdom as the use of other goods" in the first protreptic to its productive and political role in the second protreptic.

36 Many think the "stranger" is probably Isocrates, but the dialogue does not offer a name, so I will not weigh in on that matter.

37 Substituting "contest" for Sprague's "conflict."

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3 Dialectic in Plato's *Parmenides*

The Schooling of Young Socrates

Francisco J. Gonzalez

This essay is an attempt to answer one question: what exactly does Socrates learn about "dialectic" in Plato's *Parmenides*? This is a question that has been addressed already many times in the secondary literature. Yet the question has arguably been distorted by the "developmental" hypothesis through which the *Parmenides* has been interpreted in much of this literature. What we have in the dialogue, the story goes, is a "later" conception of dialectic that departs from that practiced by Socrates in "earlier" dialogues: debate then focuses on how exactly the later version differs from the earlier.[1] However, not only is the Socrates we encounter in the *Parmenides* much younger than the Socrates we encounter in any other dialogue, but he is a Socrates who *has not yet adopted dialectic as a way of doing philosophy*. As Parmenides says (135d1), the young Socrates still needs training in what people call "idle chatter" (ἀδολεσχία), which is precisely what people are said to call the dialectic practised by the older Socrates in other dialogues (cf. *Phaedo* 70c1, *Theaetetus* 195b10).[2]

The representative of dialectical method in the *Parmenides* is, in the dialogue's opening, *Zeno*, who is described as the inventor of dialectic in some ancient sources (see Diog. Laert. 8.57, citing Aristotle's lost *Sophist*; also *Phaedrus* 261d6). Zeno's method is to pay Parmenides' opponents back in kind by showing that, if absurd consequences follow from the thesis that everything is one, even more absurd consequences follow from the thesis that things are many (128c–e). The young Socrates proves unsympathetic to, perhaps even contemptuous of, Zeno's dialectical method. First of all, in suggesting that Zeno is saying the same thing as Parmenides (in trying to show that things cannot be many he is simply arguing that they are one), "but by changing it round he tries to fool us into thinking he is saying something different" (128a7–8; trans. Mary Louise Gill & Paul Ryan 1996), Socrates is suggesting that Zeno's dialectic is a fraud: it is simply a change in style to appear to be saying something different from what Parmenides already argued non-dialectically. Furthermore, Socrates asserts that there is nothing "wonderful" in things being both like and unlike, one and many, as long as one distinguishes between these things and the one, the many, the like, and the unlike

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themselves by themselves. The method of the young Socrates is to postulate the forms as existing in solemn isolation, incapable of associating with each other and therefore immune to the kind of dialectic practiced by Zeno. It is no exaggeration to say that the relation between Socrates and dialectic is depicted as one of opposition.

When the young Socrates' dogmatic, anti-dialectical "theory of forms" is demolished by Parmenides, the latter makes the lesson clear: while the young Socrates is right insofar as the existence of forms cannot be denied without destroying the power of dialectic (τῆν τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν, 135c1–2),[3] the forms cannot be understood without the dialectical training Socrates lacks. Significantly, Parmenides claims to have noticed Socrates' lack of training in hearing him converse (διαλεγομένου) with the young Aristotle: the suggestion, then, is that there is something lacking in Socrates' manner of conversing about the forms (135d1–2). Parmenides then gives the young Socrates this training in the second half of the dialogue by applying Zeno's method, not to things that are one and many, but to the one and many themselves: in other words, he does precisely what the young Socrates claims would be truly surprising and an object of wonder. Parmenides, however, makes a significant modification to Zeno's method: he stipulates that we must consider the consequences not only of the positive thesis that something is, but also of the negative thesis that something is not (135e8–136a2). What Parmenides says implies that this modification is needed if the dialectical method is not to be simply a form of competition, as Zeno admits it to be in his case (φιλονικία, 128d7), but a way to "see through to the truth in the best manner" (κυρίως διόψεσθαι τὸ ἀληθές, 136c4–5).

In turning, then, to the dialectical display that forms the second half of the dialogue, we must ask, first, in what way dialectic is shown there to be required for bringing into view the truth (the results of the display, seemingly so contradictory, are described in the last word of the dialogue as ἀληθέστατα, 166c5), and second, what Socrates learns from this training that explains his own turn to a form of dialectical method later in life when philosophy has finally "gripped him" (see 130e2–3). In the context of this chapter it will be possible only to sketch answers to these questions, but I nevertheless aim to show how the older Socrates' use of dialectic to get at the truth is inspired by what he learns as a young man in the second half of the *Parmenides*.

Dialectic in the Parmenides

How does Parmenides characterize his dialectical exercise? The crucial elements are the following, where the first two are explicit departures from Zeno's method:

A) The exercise is not to be confined to visible things, but is to examine those things which "one might most grasp by means of reason and might consider to be forms" (135e2–4).

B) "In addition to this it is necessary not only to hypothesize if each thing is and to examine the consequences of that hypothesis, but also to hypothesize if that same thing is not, if you wish to be better exercised" (135e8–136a2). Parmenides furthermore makes clear that, while he will choose to illustrate the method with one particular example, the thing hypothesized can be anything, or at least any form: "And the same account applies to unlike, as well as to motion and rest, generation and destruction, and to being itself and not-being and, in a word, to whatever you might ever hypothesize as being or not being or as having any other property" (136b4–8).

C) The consequences to be examined are the consequences *for the thing hypothesized and for other things, and for each in relation to itself and in relation to other things* (136b8–c3).

D) To "hypothesize" something in this case is, as seen in the passage quoted immediately above, to hypothesize it as "being or not being, *or as having any other property*" (ὡς ὄντος καὶ ὡς οὐκ ὄντος καὶ ὁτιοῦν ἄλλο πάθος πάσχοντος, 136b7–8, my emphasis). The often-neglected italicised qualification will prove important when we turn to dialectic in other dialogues. Note for now that hypotheses according to Parmenides could be not only "virtue exists" and "virtue does not exist," but also "virtue is teachable" and "virtue is not teachable;" not only "friendship exists" and "friendship does not exist," but also "friendship exists between like and like" and "friendship exists between opposites."

E) To examine the consequences for something "in relation to the others" is to examine them "in relation to each one of the others, whichever you select, and in relation to several of them and to all of them in the same way" (136c1–2). This strange stipulation also does not generally receive enough attention. Parmenides' actual demonstration will speak of consequences only for indefinite "others;" given what he says in his program, this must count as a significant short cut. What he should also do is examine the consequences of the hypothesis *for individual things other than what is hypothesized or for individual groups of things*. For example, if the one is not, what are the consequences for *virtue*? Given the obvious impossibility of examining the consequences for every single individual thing other than what is hypothesized, Parmenides also introduces here the flexibility of choice: you are to examine the consequences for whichever thing or things among the others *you choose* (ὅτι ἂν προέλῃ, 136c1–2; ὅτι ἂν προαιρῇ ἀεί, 136c3). This presumably depends on the context and this adaptability to context must also be kept in mind.

If Socrates claims not quite to understand, it is with good reason: each of these points of the exercise is opaque. But most opaque of all is the point of the exercise. All Parmenides says is that it is necessary in order "to see

through to the truth in the best manner" (136c5). But no indication whatsoever is given of *how* this method is supposed to lead us to the truth.

Given the requirement of examining the consequences of opposed hypotheses, it is very tempting to assume that the method gets at the truth as follows: by examining the consequences of one hypothesis and those of the opposed hypothesis and showing that the consequences of one hypothesis are acceptable whereas those of the other are not, the truth of the hypothesis with acceptable consequences is demonstrated. A similar procedure is indeed identified with a method of hypothesis in the *Phaedo* despite clear differences (101d3–e3).[4] This is the way in which at least many Neoplatonists interpreted the method of the *Parmenides*,[5] claiming that the being of the one is demonstrated by the fact that the consequences of the opposite hypothesis, i.e., that the one is not, are unacceptable. Strong evidence in support of this reading is that Zeno is explicitly the model and Zeno sought to refute the existence of "many" by showing the absurd, contradictory consequences of this hypothesis.[6]

But the major problem with this reading is that Parmenides not only never says that the objective of the method is to disprove a hypothesis by showing its unacceptable consequences, but also *does not do this* when he exhibits the method. Parmenides draws consequences from the hypothesis "the one is" and from the hypothesis "the one is not" without ever suggesting that one set of consequences is acceptable and the other is not and that therefore one hypothesis is refuted and the other demonstrated. Furthermore, a central feature of Parmenides' demonstration that is not at all anticipated or explained by his programmatic remarks on the method as outlined above completely undermines the possibility of the method being one of demonstration by consequences: in each case, after drawing the consequences of an hypothesis, Parmenides will "start again from the beginning" and draw the opposite consequences from the same hypothesis. That is a very strange way of seeking to demonstrate or refute an hypothesis! And if one says that the very fact that opposite consequences can be drawn from an hypothesis simply by starting over shows that the hypothesis is untenable, then Parmenides' method refutes both opposed hypotheses and, far from providing a vision of the truth, leaves us with nothing.

So it seems that there must be *another way* in which the method enables us to get the best view of the truth. When Zeno himself formulates the goal of the method, the key appears to lie in the comprehensiveness of the method: "for the many are ignorant of the fact that, without this course and wandering [πλάνη] through all things, it is impossible to possess understanding in hitting upon the truth" (136e1–3). The key here appears to be going through everything and, indeed, the point of all the features of Parmenides' method is clearly exhaustiveness and comprehensiveness. This requirement of comprehensiveness is also at least part of the explanation of Parmenides' insistence on an interlocutor who will

not cause trouble (at 137b6–8): if Socrates were the interlocutor, rather than the passive Aristotle, he would be constantly making objections to individual arguments and would thus prevent the "wandering through all things" that Parmenides clearly considers essential to his training (see Sinaiko 1965, 233–5). But, again, how is this "wandering through all things" supposed to get us to the truth? Through a kind of "sifting" in which we separate the true from the false? But again, Parmenides' demonstration gives no hint of this. Instead, all of the consequences of all of the hypotheses, however contradictory they may be, are summarized at the end as being on a level and altogether being "most true." It seems that the very comprehensiveness of the method is what reveals the truth. But how?

Since what the method reveals, as a corrective to Socrates' precipitateness in having sought too soon to "mark off" each of the forms (see 135c8–d1), is that even "those things that one might above all grasp by means of reason and might think to be forms" (135e3–4) are subject to "wandering [πλάνη] between opposites" (135e2), the truth it discovers is arguably not in any one hypothesis or deduction, but *in the wandering itself*, in the appearing-now-one-way-now-another, in the constant "switch-over" (μεταβολή) between one set of consequences and the opposite consequences. The truth is in *seeing past* Socrates' simple postulation of each form as being only itself, in splendid isolation from all the others. The truth is in *ambiguity*,[7] in the very ambiguity, for example, built into the hypothesis "εἰ ἕν ἐστι".[8]

How it is possible to read the deductions as all being true is explicitly explained in Parmenides' exercise itself: not of course in one of the deductions (since no deduction can in itself acknowledge the truth of the opposite deduction), but in an argument that represents an anomaly in the structure, standing outside of the opposed deductions and therefore explicitly labeled "the third" (τὸ τρίτον, 155e4) in the text.[9]

It is clearly not possible within the confines of the present chapter to defend a particular reading of the deductions of the second half of the *Parmenides;* for such a defense, or at least the groundwork for it, I must refer the reader elsewhere (see Gonzalez 2019, Forthcoming). Here it is possible only to state and briefly explain the central elements of my reading. (1) The most important structural feature of the deductions is the one Parmenides never explains but only demonstrates: the *repetition* of each deduction, starting again from the beginning (πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς, 142b1–2, 159b3–4, 163b6, 165e2), with the repetition always leading to the opposite consequences. *Why* he should do this we are never told nor do modern commentators as a whole attempt to provide an answer. (2) After the first repetition of a deduction yielding consequences opposite to those yielded the first time, we have a discussion in the text labeled only as "the third" (the only part of Parmenides' exercise given an explicit number). The reference is clearly not to a *third deduction*: the text does not begin, like the first two deductions, with the hypothesis "If the one is" and then

proceed to deduce a further set of consequences. Rather, *it begins with the consequences* of the first two deductions and explains a way of holding onto both sets of consequences despite their seeming incompatibility: "If the one is *as we have described it*—being both one and many [result of second deduction] and neither one nor many [result of first deduction], and partaking of time [result of second deduction]" (155e4–6), and, as we will see, existing outside of time in the "instant" (result of first deduction). "Third" means here, as it does elsewhere in Plato, a third way between two opposite arguments (cf. Linck 2007, 60). (3) Though such a third way is not explicitly offered after the three other repetitions of a deduction with opposite consequences, Parmenides is clearly suggesting, by showing us that such a third way can be found the first time, that it can also be found in the case of the other antitheses. Indeed, perhaps the reason why a 'third' is not presented after the third and fourth, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth deductions, is that the same "third" enables us to affirm *all* of the opposite consequences. This is because the consequences, and the contradictions between them, are *the same* in each pair of deductions.[10] (4) When Parmenides concludes all of the deductions by affirming all of the opposite consequences, he has already explained to us after the discussion of "the third" how it is possible to do so without falling into absurdity. (5) If "the third" enables us to affirm contradictory conclusions, e.g., that the one is both one and many or that it is both like and unlike, it does not do so as a *synthesis*, i.e., as some proposition or doctrine that would subsume both opposed conclusions under a third conclusion. Rather, what enables us to maintain that the one is both one and many, like and unlike, etc. is the "instant" in which it switches over from one to the other and in which it *is neither one nor many, neither like nor unlike, etc., nor even in the process of becoming many or one, like or unlike, etc.* (157a4–b3). The "third" is not a synthesis of the opposite conclusions but a transcendence to which they do not apply: it is the "instant" with its paradoxical nature between rest and motion (see 156d6–7) in which the one "switches over" from being x to being not-x without, at the instant of switching over, either being or not-being x and without even becoming or ceasing to be x; beyond being and becoming, not-being and ceasing-to-be, it is also outside of time (ἐν χρόνῳ οὐδενὶ οὖσα, 156e1).[11] If Parmenides can conclude the entire exercise by affirming the whole set of contradictory conclusions, that is because what these conclusions are about transcends what they assert and is accessible in itself only in an instant that, as not in time, must also transcend all verbal expression.[12] (6) On this reading, then, a key lesson of the exercise is the possibility of maintaining opposite conclusions regarding a nature (an *eidos*) that can appear in opposite ways, suddenly switching from one way of appearing to the opposite, because it exists beyond its temporal manifestations.

If this reading is correct, what could the young Socrates have learned from the exercise? First, that a form can possess opposite characteristics,

can manifest itself in different ways in time, because in itself it transcends both of these opposite characteristics and time. Secondly, that in its transcendence the form and its unity can be said not to be as much as to be and that it is this "ambiguity" that renders "appearances" possible.[13] Thirdly, that it follows from what came above that the form cannot manifest itself except in relation to other forms, including what it is not. If these are indeed the lessons of the dialectical exercise, do we see them guiding implicitly the way in which Socrates practices dialectic in other dialogues?[14]

Dialectic in the Phaedrus

I will first consider a dialogue in which the older Socrates exhibits a dialectical method most closely parallel to that of the second half of the *Parmenides*. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates gives two speeches on *erôs*, both illustrative of the dialectical method to be discussed in the second half of the dialogue and found absent in the speech of Lysias. The two speeches reach opposed conclusions about *erôs*, the first showing it to be productive of harm to soul, body and possessions, the second showing it to be productive of the greatest benefit to human beings. At first, Socrates' recantation suggests that the first speech, as much as that of Lysias, is to be rejected as simply false (see 243a1). But when he in the second half of the dialogue analyzes the method of his two speeches, he suggests that both are true, simply viewing their subject, *erôs*, from a different side.[15] The first speech, by starting with the "left-side" of madness, arrives at a love that it *rightly* censures (266a5). The second speech, by starting with the "right-side" of madness, arrives at a love that it rightly praises.

This, of course, suggests that there are simply two different kinds of love that can be clearly divided from each other and that therefore each speech can express the full truth about the kind of love it chooses as its subject. But Socrates qualifies the truth even of the second speech, observing of it:

> and depicting, I know not how, the erotic passion, perhaps we touched upon some truth [ἴσως μὲν ἀληθοῦς τινος ἐφαπτόμενοι], even if we were immediately swept in another direction [τάχα δ᾽ ἄν καὶ ἄλλοσε παραφέρομενοι], mixing together a speech not completely lacking in persuasion.
>
> (265b6–c8)

This obscure reference to being immediately swept in another direction suggests that it is not easy or perhaps even possible to keep fully on one side of the divide between left and right and that at most we can touch upon the truth about one *erôs* or the other as we are swept back and forth. *Erôs* proves to be fundamentally ambivalent, being both an irrational force capable of undermining reason from below and a transcendent

force capable of inspiring reason from above, without there being a clear divide between the two and without it even being certain that we are speaking of two completely different forces here.[16]

Furthermore, Socrates makes it clear that *erôs* is not unique in this respect. He defines, as the object of rhetoric, of which dialectic will turn out to be at least an indispensable precondition, an entire class of kinds that cause disagreement (τῶν ἀμφισβητησίμων, 263c7–8) and "wandering" (ἐν οἷς πλανώμεθα, 263b5). While Socrates' specific examples here of things belonging to this class are the just and the good, the class would include many more kinds, indeed, all those kinds that, unlike "iron" or "silver" (Socrates' examples for the opposed class), people argue about and attempt to persuade each other about.[17] One could of course object that at one point, Socrates appears to restrict this wandering to "the many" (τὸ πλῆθος, see 263b8–9). But the question is who is included in this many and whether, in particular, Socrates himself is included. In the first passage cited above Socrates describes the class of kinds in question as those in which *we* wander and there is no indication in what he goes on to say that the wandering is confined to ignorant and unphilosophical people. Indeed, it is Socrates himself who has been seen "wandering" in this way in his two speeches on love. Furthermore, the classification into two kinds (εἰδῆ) of things suggests that the wandering has its cause in the things themselves and not merely in one's inadequate perception.

Here Socrates shows that he has indeed learned an important lesson from the dialectical training he received as a young man from Parmenides: that the kinds with which he is concerned can themselves cause wandering, appearing in different ways. The connection is made even clearer when Socrates, just a little before his classification of the kinds of things that cause wandering, refers to the "Eleatic Palamedes," i.e. Zeno, as being "such an artful speaker that his listeners will perceive the same things to be both similar and dissimilar, both one and many, both at rest and also in motion" (261d6–8). This is the artful speaking Zeno is described as having demonstrated in the *Parmenides*. And here, rather than dismissing Zeno's art as a mere fraud, Socrates presents it as evidence that the art of "speaking on both sides" (ἀντιλογική, 261d10) is not confined to the law courts or assemblies, but that, if such a thing exists, there is one art of speaking *regarding all things that are said* (261e1). If indeed, as Socrates proceeds to argue, the topics of the art of speaking are such as to cause wandering, then all speaking with art will be a "speaking on both sides," whether with the intent to deceive or with the goal of discovering the truth (since, as Socrates argues here, the requirements are the same in both cases).[18] Furthermore, as both the reference to Zeno and the extension of the art of speaking beyond both law courts and assemblies suggest, this art of speaking is nothing other than the art on which Socrates here is attempting to found rhetoric: i.e., dialectic.

The Philebus *on the eternal instability of the objects of discourse*

In the *Philebus* Socrates makes an extraordinary claim that not only clearly reflects the lesson learned in the *Parmenides* but closely parallels what we have found in the *Phaedrus*. While proponents of the developmentalist hypothesis see the *Phaedrus* as predating and the *Philebus* as postdating the *Parmenides*, the parallel way in which *both* express a lesson learned in this dialogue shows that the important distinction is not the supposedly chronological one but the dramatic one between a younger and an older Socrates. In the *Philebus* the older Socrates is faced with the dispute concerning whether the life of knowledge or the life of pleasure is the happy life and with the problem both knowledge and pleasure present of each appearing both one and many.[19] Observing that this many being one and one being many is something to wonder at (14c8–9) in the case of unities that neither come to be nor perish (15a1–2), he then observes that

> it is through *discourse* [note: *not* perception] that the same thing flits around [περιτρέχειν πάντῃ], becoming one and many in all sorts of ways, in whatever it may be that is said at any time, both long ago and now. *And this will never come to an end, nor has it just begun, but it seems to me that this is an 'immortal and ageless' condition.*
>
> (15d4–9; trans. Dorothea Frede, my emphasis)

It is the italicized claim that is truly striking: while Socrates goes on to say that young people take advantage of this condition for their own amusement, the condition is nevertheless permanent: the things we speak of will always wander around, appearing in many different ways. What the young Socrates believed was confined to the objects of perception the older Socrates of the *Philebus*, like that of the *Phaedrus*, sees as afflicting the objects of speech. Furthermore, as Socrates proceeds to consider the two opposed theses, considering their consequences and trying to sort the appearances of unity and multiplicity they present, he arrives at a *third* position between the two, explicitly labeled as *to triton*: the "mixed" life in which both pleasure and knowledge, despite the opposition they will exhibit in the discussion, are components (14b4, 67a10–11). Arriving at this conclusion also involves spotting other "thirds:" between pleasure and pain (32e9, 43e3, 55a6) and, most importantly, between limit and the unlimited (25b5, 26b7) which, in turn, makes possible a "becoming towards being" that overcomes the opposition between becoming and being (26d7–8; see also 27b8–9). In short, by wandering back and forth in our discourse we are able to spot some third thing that transcends the oppositions.

Dialectical Wandering in Other Dialogues

What we see in the *Phaedrus* and the *Philebus* is not confined to those dialogues. We see Socrates also elsewhere arguing for and against opposed hypotheses and thereby suggesting that there is a 'third' between them from whose perspective they can be regarded as both true and both false.[20] Given limitations of space, I will consider briefly only the following examples:

1) In the *Lysis*, Socrates argues against the hypothesis that friendship occurs between like and like by showing that it requires some dissimilarity in the friends and argues against the hypothesis that friendship occurs between opposites by showing that it requires similarity between the friends.[21] Socrates confesses himself to be made dizzy by the *aporia* of the argument (216c4–6), but suggests that this is due to the slippery character of the beautiful (which he immediately identifies with the good that will in turn prove to be the true object of friendship): "and the proverb might prove to be true that the beautiful is *philon*. For it appears to be something soft and smooth and slippery, so that this is perhaps why it easily slips away and escapes our grasp, since it is of this sort" (ῥᾳδίως διολισθαίνει καὶ διαδύεται ἡμᾶς, ἅτε τοιοῦτον ὄν, 216d1–2; my translation).[22] The phrase "of this sort" suggests the existence of a class of things that easily slips away and escapes our grasp, and that includes beauty and the good: precisely the point made explicit in the *Phaedrus*. A sudden inspiration (ἀπομαντευόμενος, 216d3) then reveals to Socrates the third option of a *metaxu*: *what is neither good nor bad* being a friend to the good (where the two terms of the relationship are clearly neither like nor opposites).[23]
2) In the *Laches* Socrates argues that courage, being good, cannot be *foolish* endurance (192c–d) and then immediately turns to arguing that courage cannot be wise endurance precisely because knowledge, as minimizing risk and assuring control, is incompatible with courage (192e–193d). Nicias is then asked to save Socrates and Laches as they are storm-tossed in the argument and without a way out (194c2–3). Nicias of course will provide no help at all, unsuccessfully trying to defend the thesis that courage is a type of wisdom (i.e., knowledge of the fearful and hopeful, 194e11–195a1) against Laches' insistence that wisdom and courage are completely separate things (195a4). And so the same difficulty remains until the end: is courage knowledge and, if so, what sort of knowledge? What the opposed arguments force us to look for, and perhaps to find in Socrates' own dialectical practice,[24] is a kind of knowledge that does

not, like technical knowledge, involve a mastery that would exclude all risk.[25]

3) In the *Protagoras*, Socrates argues, first, that virtue is not teachable on the basis of there being no recognized experts on virtue and apparently no ability on the part of the virtuous to pass on their virtue to their children (319b–320b). As the dialogue proceeds, however, he ends up arguing that virtue is knowledge, thus implying that it is teachable, while suggesting that Protagoras has taken the opposite course: arguing at first that virtue is teachable, but then insisting that it is not knowledge. Socrates at the end therefore describes himself as seeing things wandering up and down in the most terrible fashion (ἄνω κάτω ταραττόμενα δεινῶς) and as greatly desiring to have them become clear (361c2–4).[26] Again a third option is suggested in the central tenet of Socrates' Simonides interpretation (343c–347a): that while the state of *being* good that Protagoras claims to teach is impossible for human beings, being the privilege of god alone, human beings are capable of the constant process of *becoming* good.[27] A parallel is offered by the *Meno*, where Socrates, explicitly appealing to a method of hypothesis, argues for the contradictory hypotheses that virtue is teachable (87b–89c) and that it is not teachable (89d–97c).[28] Here too a third option is suggested with the notion of recollection, the key lesson of which is that we become better people in searching (86b7–c1).

What we see in all of these cases[29] is Socrates taking advantage of the fact that the *eidē* in question are causes of "wandering" in order to argue for opposed hypotheses. But this is not just an eristic game that plays on the confusion of the many. Instead, Socrates is able to argue in the way he does because there are two genuinely true sides to the issue that, in both being true while also opposed, point to a third option that transcends them and show that the kind in question cannot be reduced to the one side or the other. Just as we learn from the "third" in the dialectical exercise of the *Parmenides* that the one can be both one and many and neither one nor many, can be both like and unlike and neither like nor unlike, so we learn that friends are both like and unlike and neither like nor unlike, that virtue is both teachable and unteachable and neither teachable nor unteachable, that courage is both knowledge and ignorance and neither knowledge nor ignorance. We cannot imagine the young Socrates before his dialectical training in the *Parmenides* arguing in the way that we see the older Socrates argue: while the young Socrates insisted on each form being simply what it is and not appearing as anything other than what it is, while he indeed did not believe that the Zenonian dialectic is rightly applied to the forms themselves, the older Socrates insists that the forms are objects of dialectic precisely because they are ἀμφισβητησίμα and causes of wandering and himself argues in a way that plays on their

inherent ambiguity with the goal of revealing the truth about them in the totality of perspectives they offer.

One final observation is required here for the sake of clarity. If, in response to the suggestion that we have in the *Parmenides* a model of arguing on both sides of a question that is followed in other dialogues, one asks where such a method is supposed to lead us, there are, I suggest, three possible answers:

1) We will eventually arrive at a knowledge of the nature of the thing in question that will permit us to judge the reasons on one side inconclusive and the reasons on the other conclusive. E.g., after coming to know what virtue is, we will see that it is in fact teachable and that the arguments for its unteachability are not conclusive. Or, once we come to know the nature of the One, we will see that the conclusions derived from the hypothesis of its existence in the second deduction are valid while those derived in the first deduction are not.
2) We will conclude that knowledge of the nature of the thing in question is beyond our reach and that therefore the only way out of the *aporia* created by arguments on two sides of a question is to suspend judgement. E.g., because we cannot know what virtue is, we simply cannot determine whether it is teachable or not. Or, because we cannot know the nature of the One, we simply cannot decide between the conclusions of opposite deductions.
3) The reasons on the opposite sides of a question are both conclusive because they articulate different perspectives on the nature in question where both of these perspectives can be true given that the nature in question cannot be fully captured by one to the exclusion of the other. The nature of virtue is such that it cannot be said to be simply teachable or simply unteachable but is both and neither. The nature of the One is such that it cannot be said to be simply one or simply many or simply in time or simply not in time or even simply to exist or simply not to exist, but is equally both and neither.

The reason option 3) is usually not considered is that it appears to violate the principle of non-contradiction.[30] The model here, i.e., the "third" section of Parmenides' deductions and the conclusion of the deductions as a whole, must then itself appear to violate the principle. But what we have here is not so much a violation of the principle as a limitation of its scope. That it applies to particular things (substances in Aristotle's terminology) in relation to their properties is clear: a particular thing cannot be silver and not silver in the same respect, in the same part of itself, and at the same time, etc. But that the principle applies to what are not "things" or individual substances at all nor properties of these things, such as the "One," is by no means clear. While a sensible object can be both one and many in a way that does not violate the principle of non-contradiction

(e.g., one person possessing many limbs), the being-many of the One itself does not appear subject to the principle (how, after all, would the needed qualifications of "time" or "part" apply to it?)

Here I assume option 3) without being able to defend it, arguing only that the question of which option we defend is *the same* for the second half of the *Parmenides* and for the aporetic dialogues because the dialectic practiced in the two cases, while clearly not identical, is similar in the ways relevant to the question.

Learning Wonder

One commentator has felicitously described the young Socrates' "desire to shut out the wondrousness of phenomena" (Linck 2007, 44). As already noted, the young Socrates' objection against Zeno is that, if the same things partake of both being like and being unlike, this is nothing to wonder at (τί θαυμαστόν, 129b1). He indeed insists obsessively on this point that there is nothing to wonder at in things partaking of opposite properties (τί θαυμαστόν, 129c4; ὀύδέ τι θαυμαστὸν λέγειν, 129d5–6). Socrates of course adds that he *would* consider it a wonder (τέρας ἂν οἶμαι ἦν, 129b1-2; τοῦτο ἤδη θαυμάσομαι, 129c1; ἀγαίμην ἄν ἔγωγ', ἔφη, θαυμαστῶς, 129e3) if likeness itself could participate in unlikeness and if in general opposite forms could themselves participate in each other.[31] But since the young Socrates does not appear to consider the latter a real possibility, there is literally nothing in the heavens or on the earth that provokes his wonder. A central task of the exercise he needs to undergo in order to mature as a philosopher is to provoke this wonder which the young dogmatist is so determined to resist. This exercise will respond to the young Socrates' challenge when he asserts that what would really impress him and make him wonder is if Zeno and Parmenides could show that the same *aporia* found in visible things is "in many different ways entangled" in the things grasped by reasoning, i.e., in the forms themselves (129e5–130a2).

Of course, the older Socrates, having learned that even the things grasped by reason are characterized by an ambivalence that can throw one into *aporia*, that "wandering" is not confined to the sensible realm, is susceptible to wonder. Indeed, when Theaetetus, in the dialogue named after him, confesses that he "wonders exceedingly" (155c8–9) when faced with puzzles such as how a thing can become smaller or larger than something else without undergoing any change itself, the old Socrates does not respond, as the young Socrates would have, that there is really nothing to wonder at here; instead he responds that this wonder is very much the *pathos* characteristic of the philosopher (155d2–3). In the passage from the *Philebus* already referred to above, Socrates, though claiming with his younger self in the *Parmenides* that one being many and many being one is a childish commonplace when we are speaking of sensible unities, now

recognizes the wonder of this phenomenon on the level of unities that neither come to be nor perish (see 14c8–9 and 15a1–2). Furthermore, in the *Republic*, the older Socrates, rather than treating the co-presence of opposite properties in the things we perceive (such as big and small, one and many) as nothing to wonder at, like the young Socrates, suggests that it is the puzzlement caused in the soul by this phenomenon (τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπορεῖν, 524a5–6; see also 524e4–5) that leads the soul beyond the sensible to reflection on the intelligible properties themselves (523b–525b). This does not mean that puzzlement will end for the soul once it turns to the intelligible forms themselves. While the passage from the *Republic* does indeed speak specifically about the co-presence of opposites in sensation since it seeks to explain how the mind can be led from sensation to the intelligible realm, the same dialogue describes the soul as puzzled by the idea of the good itself (505e1–4), even though it is the most intelligible form as the cause of intelligibility for all the other forms, and this because it is caught in the dilemma of not being able to identify it with knowledge or pleasure. Furthermore, the aim of the exercise in the *Parmenides* is, as we have seen, to show that the same *aporia* is entangled in the intelligible forms themselves; and in the cases we have considered, it is the intelligible form itself as the object of Socrates' "What is x?" question that causes puzzlement.

Diverse Accounts of Dialectical Method

In short, rather than a particular technical method, what is learned by the young dogmatic Socrates, with his conviction that on the level of the forms there can be no ambiguity or complexity, is how to *wander* in such a way as best to reveal the truth about the kinds in question, even if this exposes him to the *pathos* of wonder.[32] We do, of course, find Socrates in other dialogues describing a method, or rather methods, of dialectic and so we cannot avoid asking how these described methods relate to that illustrated in the second half of the *Parmenides*. As for what has been called "the method of hypothesis" as found very differently articulated in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, we have seen certain affinities between the dialectical method of the *Parmenides* and the former and significant differences with the latter. If the young Socrates learned how to formulate and investigate hypotheses from the exercise of Parmenides, the older Socrates clearly applies this lesson differently in different contexts.

What of the dialectic so much discussed and recommended, if not practiced by Socrates in the central books of the *Republic*? Here I can make only two observations.[33] First, despite all the importance Socrates gives to dialectic in the *Republic*, he notoriously never tells us there what exactly it involves. When Glaucon asks Socrates to explain "what is the sort of power dialectic has, what forms is it divided into, and what paths does it follow?" (532d8–e1), Socrates declines with the following excuse:

> You won't be able to follow me any longer, Glaucon, even though there is no lack of eagerness on my part to lead you, for you would no longer be seeing an image of what we're describing, but the truth itself.
>
> (533a1–3; trans. Grube/Reeve)[34]

The contrast with Parmenides' response when the young Socrates similarly asks for an explanation of the method he is recommending is striking: Parmenides agrees, even if reluctantly given the effort involved, to demonstrate the method for him. Secondly, what Socrates *does* proceed to say is that dialectic, unlike the different branches of mathematics, does not leave the hypotheses untouched (ἀκινήτους, 533c3), but *destroys* them (τὰς ὑποθέσεις ἀναιροῦσα, 533c9) in proceeding to a first principle in order to be secured (533d1).

Whatever method is actually envisioned here, and that is again neither clear nor explained, it might appear the opposite of the dialectic the young Socrates learns from Parmenides. After all, Parmenides' method, as argued above, never claims or pretends to refute any of the hypotheses; on the contrary, it leaves them all standing. Furthermore, there is no talk in it of ascending to a higher principle. Yet, we have also seen that the effect of drawing opposite conclusions from the hypothesis is to force us to look beyond this opposition and beyond the hypothesis that generates them. In addition, the anomalous deduction that Parmenides labels "the third" explicitly thematizes a principle that, in "switching" back and forth between opposite characteristics in the timeless instant, transcends the opposition. So one could say that Parmenides in, for example, drawing opposite conclusions from the hypothesis "if the one is," "destroys" the hypothesis, not in the sense of refuting it or showing it to be false, but in the sense of forcing us to look beyond it for a principle transcending it and capable of reconciling the opposite conclusions it generates: what Parmenides presents under the heading of "the third." I neither can nor wish to argue here that the dialectic Socrates declines to explain in the *Republic* is the *same* as that which Parmenides demonstrated for him when he was young; as is well known, Plato's preferred method of "dialectic" appears in many different guises in the dialogues and it is a foolhardy endeavor to attempt to reduce them all to one self-same method. The suggestion is simply that there is more of an affinity here than might at first appear. A common requirement in both cases, given what we have seen to be the emphasis in the *Parmenides* on comprehensiveness as a requirement for seeing the truth, is indeed that the dialectician be *sunoptikos*, i.e., have a vision of the whole (537c7).[35]

The crucial point is that we should in any case not expect the lesson Socrates learns from the exercise in the *Parmenides* to take the form of a method to be rigorously and faithfully applied. Socrates' immediate response to Parmenides' description of the method he will go on to

illustrate is that it is "impossible to put into practice" (136c6). Nothing in Parmenides' illustration gives us reason to question this assessment: Parmenides himself in addressing the hypotheses "the one is" and "the one is not" must take short cuts as the deductions proceed, each deduction becoming shorter through an "etcetera" that avoids addressing the specific characteristics individually. But what in particular prompts Socrates' reaction is, first, Parmenides' suggestion that the same method is to be applied to *every* topic, so that, for example, after Parmenides' own deductions we would need to repeat the whole process with the hypothesis "if likeness is," then with the hypothesis "if unlikeness is," then with the hypothesis "if motion is," then with the hypothesis "if rest is," and so on and so on, even turning eventually to the hypothesis "if being is."[36] If that were not enough, Parmenides also prescribes examining the consequences not only for things other than what is hypothesized taken as an indefinite whole, but "in relation to each one of the others, whichever you select, and in relation to several of them and to all of them in the same way" (136c1–2). But here we have just another lesson learned by the young Socrates since as an older man he tends to describe dialectic, however conceived, as something beyond what human beings can normally put into practice. The method recommended in the *Phaedo* can be pursued only "as much as is possible for a human being" (107b7–8). As for the dialectic that Socrates in the *Republic* judges to be beyond the understanding of Glaucon, even in an ideal city that has never existed and likely never will, the philosopher rulers will be able fully to exercise it only at age 50 after decades of both practical and theoretical training (540a).

When in the *Phaedrus* Socrates identifies the art of speaking with "the ability to enumerate the sorts of characters to be found in any audience, to divide everything according to its kinds, and to grasp each single thing firmly by means of one form," he again qualifies: *to the extent any human being can possess such an art* (273e3–4); and Phaedrus responds, with as much justification as the young Socrates in the *Parmenides*: "if anyone should be capable of this" (274a7). The reference here is to yet another dialectical method, i.e., that of collection and division, and Socrates' description of himself in the same dialogue as a *lover* of collections and divisions (ἐραστής τῶν διαιρέσεων καὶ συναγωγῶν, 266b3–4) itself clearly presupposes the training he received in the *Parmenides*. Socrates' love of the method is due to its promise of presenting systematically the ambiguity of the *eidē* and the complex web of relations in which they alone have meaning. We therefore cannot imagine the young Socrates, who holds that each *eidos* is solely what it is itself by itself, as being a lover of collections and divisions.[37] But the description of himself as a "lover" of the method also suggests that it is something he only aspires to, a suggestion confirmed by his claim that he would follow in the tracks of someone "capable of discerning a single thing that is also by nature capable of

encompassing many" *as if he were a god* (266b6–7). In the *Philebus* the method of collection and division is likewise introduced by Socrates as "not very hard to describe but extremely difficult to use" (16c1–2) and as a "gift of the gods to men" (16c5).

In conclusion, then, we could say that the lesson Socrates learned from Parmenides was to recognize and deal dialectically with the condition of the forms appearing in opposite ways in our wandering speech and to project the unattainable ideal, nevertheless to be approximated as much as humanly possible, of an *art* of dialectic that would put an end to this wandering. Without the *Parmenides* we might think that the older Socrates' habit of generating *aporiai* through opposing *logos* to *logos*, that his dizzying reversals, that his play with the ambiguity of words, that his refusal to develop a clear and coherent theory both of dialectic and of the forms, are simply signs of helplessness and confusion. With the *Parmenides* we see that all of this is instead the result of a profound lesson Socrates learned as a young man: a lesson about the wandering in the nature of things themselves and about how to gain insight, not by suppressing this wandering, but by intelligently responding to it. The dogmatism of youth gives way to the wisdom of maturity.

Notes

1 A clear example is the work of Kenneth Sayre, summarized in Sayre 2017, 81–89. Sayre quite absurdly compares rejection of the developmentalist hypothesis with denial of climate-change (88), as if the level of evidence were the same in both cases. Also worth noting here is Rickless 2007, that, minus the developmentalism, is not far in its conclusions from the reading of the *Parmenides* proposed here.

2 On the importance of the fictive or dramatic chronology of Plato's works, including the *Parmenides*, the discussion in Wieland 1999, 83–94 not only is still unsurpassed, but has lost none of its relevance or importance.

3 For additional discussion of this expression, see the contributions by Vasilis Politis and Vivil V. Haraldsen to this anthology.

4 Parmenides' method does not involve ascending to a higher hypothesis, but only considering opposite hypotheses; there is also in the *Phaedo*'s method no distinction between considering consequences for a thing in relation to itself and consequences for it in relation to other things. Sayre takes the method of the *Parmenides* to improve in these respects on the supposedly "earlier" hypothetical method of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* (2005, 38–39, also 1996, 105–6, and 2017, 87). While the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* speak vaguely of ascending to a "sufficient" hypothesis or an unhypothetical starting point, the *Parmenides*, Sayre maintains, suggests the following method: that consequence C should logically follow from both the hypothesis and the negation of the hypothesis is a sufficient condition for the truth of C. The problem is that in Parmenides' demonstration both C and not-C follow from both the hypothesis and the negation of the hypothesis.

5 Proclus, applying the method to the soul by way of illustration, takes it to work as follows: by showing that the existence of motion and life follow from the hypothesis "if soul exists" and that their non-existence follows from

the hypothesis "if soul does not exist,, one demonstrates that the soul is the cause of motion and life and, given the evident existence of the latter, that the soul exists (see *In Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria*, 998–1006). So when the One is made the subject of the method in Parmenides' demonstration, "Parmenides will show by means of all his propositions that the One is at every level the cause of existence of beings and of the henads among them, which we declare to be the purpose of the whole dialogue" (1009; trans. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon, 358). Later he criticizes other commentators for not seeing that "the first five hypotheses produce true conclusions, whereas the last four lead to absurdities" (1056; Morrow & Dillon 1987, 413)

6 For the significant differences that still obtain between Zeno's method and that of Parmenides, to be discussed below, see also Sayre 1996, 100–101.

7 I use the term "ambiguity" to signal a third option beyond two opposed ways of reading the subject of the hypotheses that both appear problematic, as Proclus already saw. If the hypothesis from which the contradictory conclusions are drawn has an identical sense in each case, then one "is truly engaged in idle sport, and is 'pursuing a game proper' not 'to old men' but to children, when indulging in that" (1040–41; Dillon and Morrow, 401). On the other hand, if the hypothesis has completely different senses in the different deductions, then the demonstration fails to achieve its aim, "[f]or the task was to examine the consequences of postulating and denying one and the same thing, not to jump from one sense of the word to another" (1043; Dillon and Morrow, 403). Francis M. Cornford claims that it "has been obvious to all commentators, ancient and modern" that the One has different senses in the different deductions, despite himself noting that Parmenides' conclusion at 166c does not recognize a plurality of senses (1939, 107). R. E. Allen in contrast rightly objects to such a reading that it "is not an interpretation but a failure to interpret: for it ignores structure" (1997, 212). Yet Allen's own view of 166c is that "[n]either Socrates nor the reader can accept that result, nor reasonably suppose that Parmenides does" (226).

8 There has been much disagreement concerning what "the one" of Parmenides' hypothesis refers to. The answer is that "the one" does not and cannot have here just one meaning; nor is its plurality of meanings a mere confusion since it is by no means obvious that these different meanings could be simply demarcated from each other. See Sinaiko 1965, 238–9.

9 Paul Friedländer already defended such a reading (see 1969, 207).

10 For a clear explanation of why "the third" should be seen as mediating *all* of the hypotheses, see Sinaiko 1965, 252–3. A similar view was already advanced in Grote 1865, 310–11.

11 Here it is important to note, with Herman Sinaiko, that "according to the terms of the argument 'the one' is constantly passing through 'the moment,' for since 'the moment' itself is of no duration, it is, so to speak, always present to 'the one'" (1965, 250–251).

12 As Sinaiko notes, "Parmenides is systematically employing the unavoidable limitations of discourse to articulate a reality that lies beyond discourse and is its necessary ground" (1965, 260).

13 The topic of "appearances" explicitly enters the deductions only in the seventh deduction where, from the hypothesis that "the one is not," it is concluded that the others will *appear* to have all of the opposite characteristics. But significantly, the language of appearing, if confined to the last two deductions, works its way into Parmenides' concluding summary of *all* of the deductions: "whether the one is or is not, itself and the others, both in relation to

themselves and in relation to each other, are and are not *and appear and do not appear* (καὶ φαίνεταί τε καὶ οὐ φαίνεται, 166c5) all things in all ways" (166c3–5).

14 Pace Sandra Peterson, who insists that while Socrates is older in other dialogues, he is not described there as being exercised (2000, 26). Despite noting herself that we cannot infer from this that "Plato is thereby depicting Socrates as not exercised" (26), she proceeds to speak of the Socrates of the *Laches, Charmides* and *Euthyphro* as "the unexercised, though mature" Socrates (35).

15 For further discussion of the relation between the two speeches, see the chapter by Marilena Vlad in this anthology.

16 Ernst Heitsch rightly asks how *epithumia* fits into Socrates' division, given that love was characterized as an *epithumia* at 237d3 (1997, 143). Is all *epithumia* a type of madness? And is the "right-sided" love *epithumia* as much as the "left-sided" love? See also Heitsch 1997 on how the divisions Socrates imposes retrospectively on his two speeches do not really correspond to what he actually does in the speeches, but represent instead an "idealtypische Darstellung" (142–9).

17 See *Euthyphro* 7c–d for a similar distinction.

18 Commenting on this passage Harvey Yunis writes: "For Plato *antilogikē* reflects the availability of multiple perspectives without the absolute regulating perspective of the Forms" (2011, 185–6). But is this "absolute regulating perspective" available to us except as refracted through multiple perspectives? Socrates' own myth in his second speech certainly suggests otherwise: while all human souls have seen the truth, they have caught only a partial glimpse of it which is itself forgotten in the embodied state and can be recollected only from its sensible images. In any case, Socrates certainly does not need to claim such an "absolute regulating perspective" in order to distinguish his *antilogikē* from that of the sophists: the difference lies in whether the aim is victory in the contest of words or disclosure, however limited, of the truth.

19 For additional discussion of this dispute, see the chapter by Justin Vlasits in this anthology.

20 Vasilis Politis has defended what he at one point calls "the presence and importance of dilemmatic argument" (2015, 136) in the Socratic dialogues, i.e., how Socrates argues on both sides of a whether-or-not question with apparently good reasons on both sides, thereby generating *aporia*. Some of the examples he discusses coincide with those I give below. Politis, however, does not make the connection to the lesson of the *Parmenides* nor highlight the suggestion in these dialogues of a "third" way between the opposed arguments. He also does not suggest that the *aporia* and the "What is X?" question it generates are ultimately unsolvable because pointing to a fundamental ambiguity in the kind, though in discussing the *Euthyphro* he does suggest that "the conflict of reasons is situated at the very heart of this concept [of piety]" (147–8) or, as he puts it later, "these conflicting appearances belong at the core of the idea of piety shared by Euthyphro and those around him" (224).

21 In suggesting that what he calls "the contrapuntal fugue" of the second half of the *Parmenides* "has its predecessors in Plato's work," Friedländer gives the *Lysis* as an example (1969, vol. 3, 203).

22 The Lombardo translation is disastrously wrong here: "and maybe that's why it slides and sinks into us so easily."

23 I have argued elsewhere for this line of reading; see especially Gonzalez 1995, 2000.

24 A reading I defend in Gonzalez 1998, 22–41.

25 A similar structure can be found in the *Charmides*, with its arguments against and for temperance being possible and beneficial: see Politis 2015, 149–156.
26 Of this passage Politis rightly observes: "The figure of radical imbalance of conclusions is highly significant. It means not only that each of them has argued on both sides of the dilemma regarding virtue, but they have argued on both sides *equally*, in the sense that no firm or manifest impression has emerged in favour of the reasons on the one side over those on the other" (2015, 162).
27 For a defense of this reading, see Gonzalez 2014.
28 There is a tendency in the literature to dismiss the argument against the teachability of virtue here as not serious, so that Socrates in fact is not arguing on both sides of the issue. Against this, see Politis 2015, 165–6.
29 Worth mentioning here is also the *Cratylus* where Socrates defends the opposed theses that words are natural and that they are conventional, pointing, on my reading, to a third option in that use of words Socrates identifies with dialectic: see Gonzalez 1998, ch. 3.
30 Politis, for example, thinks we ought to suppose that Plato "does not think that there can be true contradictions" (2015, 180).
31 William W. Waddell believes that the introduction of the word ἀγαίμην at 129e3 indicates that the young Socrates *desires* to have shown what he would consider an object of wonder (1894, 87). The verb ἀγαόμαι, however, does not necessarily express desire for its object. Its primary meaning is that of being amazed by something and therefore being in awe or admiration of it. This, of course, can quite naturally be accompanied by desire, delight, and pleasure in relation to that which causes the admiration, but need not be. Given how important to the young Socrates is the sharp separation between the sensible and the intelligible, it is rather unlikely that he would *desire* to be shown that the "entanglements" found on the level of the sensible are also found on the level of the intelligible; he would certainly be in awe of Parmenides if the latter were to demonstrate something he considers impossible, but this does not imply that he desires this or would be delighted by it. I therefore think that Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan are right to translate the phrase ἀγαίμην θαυμαστῶς simply as "I would be utterly amazed," with no indication of desire or delight (so also Franco Ferrari, "io ne sarei straordinariamente ammirato"). The θαυμαστῶς highlights and reinforces the meaning of "being amazed" already found in the verb ἀγαίμην. Comparable English would be: "I would love to see you do that!" Here we may in fact *not* desire the person to do that ("I would love to see you beat me!"); what the phrase expresses is rather our skepticism that the person could in fact ever do the thing in question.
32 Cornford likewise takes the exercise to show that "even the apparently simplest terms, such as 'one' and 'being'" are "dangerously ambiguous" (1939, 110).
33 For some further thoughts on the relation between the dialectic of the *Republic* and that of the *Parmenides*, see Sanday 2014, 64–73.
34 Mitchell Miller, recognizing that Plato means us to see the mature Socrates of other dialogues as having already undergone the lesson of the *Parmenides*, also notes that there Socrates is forced by his (mostly nonphilosophical) interlocutors to ignore the conceptual complexities and to speak more simply and imagistically (1986, 24–25).
35 This affinity is noted by Eric Sanday (2014, 72).
36 Proclus attempts to illustrate how the method would work on subjects other than the One (1002–1018), with debatable success and with Proclus' own observation: "A sign of the difficulty involved in using this method is the

fact that none of those who followed Plato set out any of their own works in this form (we leave aside Ammikartos, whoever he was)" (1020; Dillon and Morrow, 369). See Peterson 2000, 26–27.

37 Here I agree with Samuel Rickless who sees the method of collection and division as incompatible with what he calls the principle of "radical purity," i.e., that no form can have contrary properties (2007, 247), and who sees the young Socrates in the *Parmenides* as defending this principle (49–50). However, for Rickless the young Socrates is the old Socrates of the "middle period" dialogues and the method of collection and division is to be found only in dialogues written after the *Parmenides*. At *Republic* 476a5–7 a form is said by the older Socrates not only to be one, *but also to appear as many through its association not only with actions and bodies but with other forms* (ἀλλήλων κοινωνίᾳ), but Rickless cuts off his citation of the passage after the claim that each form is one, presumably because the rest is not relevant to the "middle theory of forms" (38). If we note that the older Socrates divides kinds in dialogues Rickless considers "early," i.e., kinds of justice in the *Euthyphro* and kinds of care for the soul and body in the *Gorgias*, he presumably would reply that these kinds *cannot yet* be "forms" in the sense of the "middle" and "late" dialogues. The strength of developmentalism is that it is unfalsifiable.

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4 Dialectic as a Paradigm in the *Republic*

On the Role of Reason in the Just Life

Vivil Valvik Haraldsen

In Plato's *Republic* we find some of the most important passages in the Platonic corpus explicitly describing the science or expertise of dialectic, *dialektikē*, and the person who possesses this expertise, *ho dialektikos*. These passages are found in the central books that describe the nature and insight required of the persons fit to rule in the good city, the philosopher-rulers. The good city, often termed *Kallipolis*,[1] is introduced into the argument in Book 2 in order to cast light on the just soul, whose description in turn forms part of Socrates' praise of the just life. It is not obvious, however, what role the account of dialectic and the insight to which it is supposed to lead has to play in the praise of justice, although it has often been assumed in the secondary literature that it is, and that the answer is that dialectic is a requirement of (at least full) justice. This chapter aims to show that it is worthwhile to raise the question what role the account of dialectic plays in the overall argument anew. It will argue that the traditional answer to the question is not correct. Rather, considerations of what role the account of dialectic may play suggest that it both presents an ideal at which we may aim in our reasoning and contributes to the general characterization of the human capacity for reasoning and of the role of reasoning in the good life.

The just soul is, according to Book 4, the soul that is ruled by reason or *to logistikon*—the reasoning part of the soul. This is one of three psychic parts identified in Book 4, the others being the spirited and the appetitive parts respectively.[2] The general characterization of the just soul is that each of its parts "does its own", that is, performs, and sticks to, its own task, in analogy with the description of the just city where each class sticks to its own task with regard to ruling and being ruled. Socrates explains that it is proper for reason to rule because it is the part that can possess wisdom and have forethought for all (*hapas*) of the soul (441e3–4). He further claims that a person is wise in virtue of the reasoning part when it rules in the soul and possesses "knowledge (*epistēmē*) of that which is beneficial for each" part and "for the whole (*holos*) composed of the community of the three" (442c4–7).[3] Towards the end of the dialogue, in Book 9, Socrates seems to consider the challenge to demonstrate

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the preferability of the just life to have been met (580c10, 591a5–9), and suggests that the one who has sense will aim in all his actions to establish and preserve a just regime under reason's rule in the soul (591c1–592a4).

While the argument of the dialogue as a whole implies that the rule of reason ensures justice and hence happiness, it is not made clear what this rule requires when justice is described in Book 4. As can be seen from his description of the wise soul, however, Socrates implies that being wise requires that reason rules in the soul. What is not clear is whether reason, in order to rule has to be wise—nor are the requirements for possessing wisdom about the soul spelled out.

According to a widespread view, the *Republic* implies that the just person is identical with the philosopher-ruler,[4] and that the insight the philosopher-rulers come to obtain through their education, including dialectic, the "coping stone" (534e2–3) of this education, is necessary for being just and thus for living happily.

This reading, however, leaves the argument of the *Republic* facing several problems. First, the reading is inconsistent with descriptions of the man with a just regime in the soul in Books 4 and 9. Second, it is not evident why the dialectical insight described in Books 6 and 7 is necessary for obtaining the state of the soul described as psychic justice where reason, spirit, and appetite do, and stick to, their own work. Third, and most serious, if Socrates' argument implies that justice requires dialectical insight only obtainable by the philosopher-rulers, Socrates is presenting a praise of the just life that leaves it irrelevant to his interlocutors. For it is plain from the passages describing the education of the philosopher-rulers that not everyone possesses the excellence in reasoning capacities or the other psychic characteristics required to complete it, and even among them, few ever obtain the insight into being and the idea of the Good to which it may lead (494a10–495a8). It is not even clear from the *Republic* whether the comprehensive insight, to which their lengthy educational programme is intended to lead, can be obtained in any other way.[5] If not, it seems that no-one has ever possessed it, and that there is little chance of obtaining it. Socrates, however, repeatedly insists that their enquiry into justice is of the greatest importance for all the interlocutors because it bears on making the right choice of a life (344d5–e3, 352d2–7, 578c5–7, cf. 618b7–619a1). But the life of the philosopher-rulers is obviously not one that can simply be chosen, and the argument in favour of the just life would seem, then, to become irrelevant for Socrates, for his interlocutors,—and for us, the readers.

The Dilemma

It is worth spelling out why this is so in terms of the challenge Socrates has agreed to take on in the dialogue. At the beginning of Book 2 Glaucon and Adeimantus ask Socrates to show what justice does when it is in the

soul, and that being just rather than merely seeming just is worthy of choice (e.g. 366b4–367e4). When Adeimantus has pointed out how justice is traditionally praised not in itself, but for its consequences, and how the poets tell us that any bad consequences of injustice can be avoided, he asks: "By what further argument could we choose justice before the greatest injustice?" (366b4–5)

Adeimantus is asking for an argument that could convince people who are in doubt about which life to choose, the just or the unjust, and a relevant answer must obviously concern a life that it is possible for such people to choose. The life of the philosopher-rulers is not such a life; nor can one choose to have the rare nature the philosopher-rulers are to possess, said to be most suited for philosophy and studies in dialectic. Consequently, neither the nature nor the educational programme of the philosopher-rulers can be required for living a just life with reason ruling in the soul—if Socrates' argument in favour of justice is to be a successful answer to the challenge he is posed.

Despite this serious problem, it is not difficult to see why the line of interpretation mentioned is so widespread; for the dialogue contains several passages that may appear to support it. First, the mere length of the description of the philosopher's nature and insight, placed at the centre of the dialogue, naturally suggests its importance for the overall argument. Second, the description of justice as a condition or virtue of the soul in Book 4 includes a reference to *epistēmē*, standardly read as implying that this condition requires that the just man[6] possesses *epistēmē*; and this might seem to imply that the just man must be a philosopher, at least in the light of passages in Books 5, 6, and 7. Third, in Books 6 and 7 Socrates makes several statements that cast doubt on the possibility of gaining any benefit of justice, any of the other virtues, or anything at all, without insight into the idea of the good (505a1–b3, cf. 517b7–c4).

The reader of the *Republic* is therefore faced with a question: what significance does the description of the philosopher-rulers and their dialectical insight have for the overall argument concerning the preferability of the just life ruled by reason? If only philosophers who have obtained the highest dialectical insight can be just, Socrates' answer becomes irrelevant.[7] If other people can be just too, we face the question wherein the rule of reason consists, and what, if anything, the description of the philosopher-rulers is intended to tell us about it. Is the account of dialectic merely a digression in relation to the praise of justice, as Socrates claims (543c5)? But it seems unsatisfactory if this account has no consequences for the dialogue's main argument, given its detail and emphasis.

Many scholars have simply sidestepped the problem; some explaining the apparent discrepancy between the initial question Socrates faces and what is purportedly his answer with reference to Plato's supposed lack of interest in ordinary people.[8] Among those acknowledging that there is a potential problem if Socrates' answer entails that only philosophers in an

exclusive sense of the term can be just, several scholars have suggested to solve it with a two-level understanding of virtue, holding that the dialogue argues that full-fledged virtue is only possible for philosophers because it requires insight into Forms, while a less complete virtue is available to the rest of the citizens of the best city, because their souls may come to be ruled by reason in a qualified way, possessing right opinion, provided to them through their upbringing or education by the philosopher-rulers.[9]

In this chapter I argue that neither an "exclusive" interpretation, according to which only philosopher-rulers (or their peers outside *Kallipolis*) may be just, nor a two-level interpretation is satisfactory, because the overall argument of the dialogue asks why people in general, who do not live in *Kallipolis* and whose reason is the reason people in general possess, should choose the just life. My starting point is that the problem with assuming that the rule of reason requires the highest dialectical insight is too serious to be sidestepped. In arguing for the solution here proposed, my aim is to show that the dialogue expounds a single, unified conception of reason, but that this conception is complex and presented and explained only gradually. I further argue that the dialogue uses "philosophy" in both wider and narrower senses, and that one must pay attention to these different senses and also to variations of the sense of the different terms commonly translated by "dialectic".

We start by considering the passages which seem most pertinent to the account of dialectic, passages containing explicit descriptions of dialectic or the dialectician, or descriptions that clearly treat of conversation in a more "technical", philosophical sense. The purpose is to sketch the main explicit characterizations of dialectic found in the dialogue, in order to be able to compare them with the description i) of justice, ii) of *to logistikon* and its role in the soul, and iii) of philosophy in different parts of the dialogue, without considering in detail exactly what dialectic comprises in the *Republic*. Next we turn to Book 4 and the description of justice, and to some passages towards the end of the dialogue that highlight the problem with supposing that the just man is required to be an expert dialectician. We then look at some of the passages describing reason (*to logistikon*) found in different parts of the work, before finally proceeding to look at some characterizations of philosophy and philosophers, in order to substantiate the suggestion that several senses of philosophy are at play in the dialogue.

The overall aim of the chapter is to establish that the dialogue's conception of the rule of reason and the resulting conception of justice is in one sense less demanding than has often been supposed. For, I argue, it does not require a divine philosophical nature and the exceptional understanding the philosopher-rulers are supposed to obtain. Nevertheless, I urge, it is more demanding than has been supposed by those who maintain that the dialogue acknowledges a lower-level virtue guided by habit and the correct opinions supplied by others. In conclusion I suggest a way

in which the description of dialectic may be relevant for understanding how reason works in the just soul, even if the highest insight towards which dialectic aims is not necessary for having a just regime in one's soul, and so for living happily.

Dialectical Enquiry and Insight

When we now turn to the descriptions of dialectic, a caveat must be mentioned. The term "dialectic" is used as a translation of a number of terms and expressions in Greek related to or involving the verb *dialegesthai*, which can also mean simply "to converse", and it may be difficult to decide whether such expressions should be taken to concern the activity of philosophical enquiry Socrates describes as the highest study at 534e in Book 7, or rather conversing more generally. Most prominent among these related terms in Greek is probably *dialektikē*, the term found at 534e3, since its form regularly presupposes the feminine noun *technē*—or possibly *epistēmē*—and thus clearly points to a more specific, technical or scientific activity than does the verb *dialegesthai* in its wider sense. In the following we will consider selected passages where we find the substantive term *dialektikē* and its masculine correlate *dialektikos*—used likewise in reference to one who has mastered such an art or science,—but I will start out with a passage containing the expression *hē tou dialegesthai dynamis*.[10] This expression is found in Socrates' explanation of the Line in Book 6. Since the context in which it is found obviously suggests advanced philosophical enquiry, it is plausible to understand the expression as concerning dialectic as the highest philosophical study rather than as simply conversing.

The simile of the Line (509d1–511e4) famously represents the class of things that are visible or perceivable and the class of things that are intelligible as two unequal sections of a line, each of which is cut into two subsections in accordance with the same ratio. When explaining the difference between the two subsections of the intelligible section (*to noēton*), Socrates offers geometry and calculation as examples of the soul's relation to the one subsection, pointing out that mathematicians employ visible things as images of the things their science is about, although these "things", which are part of the intelligible realm, are only accessible to thought, *dianoia* (510c–e). He also emphasizes that mathematicians argue on the basis of hypotheses that they do not investigate or give an account of, but simply take as known (510c2–d3). Moving on to the other section of the intelligible, Socrates first explains that by this he means "that which argument itself grasps with the power of dialectical conversing" (*hou autos ho logos haptetai tē[i] tou dialegesthai dynamei*, 511b2–3), and then describes the reasoning activity this involves: by help of this power the *logos* makes

> … the hypotheses not beginnings (*archas*) but really hypotheses—that is stepping-stones and springboards—in order to reach what is free from hypothesis at the beginning of everything (*tēn tou pantos archēn*). When it has grasped this, [it] now depends on this beginning and in such fashion goes back down again to an end; making no use of anything sensed in any way, but using forms themselves, going through forms to forms, it ends in forms too.
>
> (511b4–c2)

Here we need only emphasize that the argumentative activity described as carried out with the help of the power of dialectical conversation, *hē tou dialegesthai dynamis*, is obviously very demanding. Glaucon calls what Socrates describes an enormous task at 511c3-4. In the discussion that follows it is made clear that to reach the "beginning of everything", and thus to complete what at 532b4 is called the dialectical journey, involves grasping, by means of an account or argument (*dia tou logou*) "each thing itself that *is*", and grasping "by intellection (*noēsis*, 532b1) itself that which is good itself", thereby reaching the end of the intelligible, which is the idea of the good (cf. 517a, 540a). At 533c Socrates emphasizes that only the dialectical way of enquiry (*hē dialektikē methodos*) fully grasps what *is*, since only this *methodos* moves in the right direction, "destroying the hypotheses, [moving] to the beginning itself in order to make it secure" (533c8–9). The other arts, such as geometry, while they do lay hold of something of what is, only dream about it, because they do not investigate the hypotheses they use and are unable to give an account of them (*logon didonai*, 533c3, see also 510c6–7). At 534b3–5 Socrates suggests that the one who is to be called dialectical, *dialektikos*, is supposed to grasp the account, *logos*, of the being of each thing, and thus be able to give accounts both to himself and others.

Socrates proceeds to suggest that the same holds concerning the good; unless one is able to define for oneself thoroughly (*diorizasthai*) the idea of the good, abstracting it from everything else, distinguishing it in an account or argument (*tō[i] logō[i]*) and get through every test or examination (*elenchos*, 534c1), one cannot be said to know the good itself or any other good, and this ability is thereby implied to be a further requirement for being *dialektikos*. Socrates now asks Glaucon whether he would lay down as a law in *Kallipolis* that special attention should be paid to the education which will make the future rulers able to question and answer most knowledgeably (534d8–10), an ability that presumably is necessary to get through the examinations just mentioned. Socrates then asks whether Glaucon thinks that they have placed dialectic (*dialektikē*) at the top of the studies like a coping stone, bringing the account of what the future rulers must learn to an end, thereby making it clear that the ability to perform and get through examinations through questioning and

answering also forms part of being dialectical. Finally, at 537c where we find the last instance of the adjective *dialektikos* in the dialogue, Socrates states that the greatest test of the dialectical nature is whether one is capable of an overview, of seeing things together, in their interconnections; the one who is *synoptikos* is the one who is *dialektikos* (537c6–7).

On the basis of these descriptions of dialectic and the nature suited for dialectical studies, it should be clear that Socrates does not present dialectical insight as something one can simply choose to obtain. We can add that Socrates himself repeatedly implies that he does not possess the insight that is the culmination of dialectic. He even makes it clear that he does not have knowledge about the idea of the good, but only presents his opinions, *doxai*, about it (506c–e, cf. 337e4–7). If reason's rule in the soul requires the insight dialectical studies may provide into the idea of the good, it seems that not even Socrates' soul is ruled by reason, and if so, not even Socrates is just.

One might perhaps suggest that this is not a problem; Socrates' well-known modesty keeps him from displaying himself as just, but the account of the just soul nevertheless entails that justice requires knowledge of forms and of the idea of the good. But what about the problem pointed out at the outset? What kind of answer is this to the challenge that Socrates has accepted, to show that the just life is preferable to the unjust life?

As was mentioned above, many commentators suppose that Plato is not interested in giving an account of justice for ordinary people because he supposed they possess very limited capacity for reasoning activity. It may then be assumed that this explains why he lets Socrates answer the initial challenge by demonstrating the happiness of the just life, even while describing the just life as a possibility only for those of superior capacities and achievements in reasoning.

This would still, however, be a catastrophically unsatisfactory answer to the challenge Socrates is facing. For the answer would amount to admitting that for ordinary people, whether they be citizens of the hypothetically good city founded in words or not, Thrasymachus is right when he in Book 1 claims that justice is not one's own good, but the good of another (343c2–4), since it would be good for the one able to attain it, but only attainable by someone else.

This is not the kind of answer we should understand Socrates to be giving. Let us therefore look more closely at the conception of dialectic in the dialogue in the light of some further relevant passages that modifies the picture just sketched.

Dialectic Again

The descriptions of dialectic and of the dialectician we have looked at above are part of the description of the selection and education of rulers in the hypothetically good city. Those who are to be selected as candidates

for ruling must consistently meet very high requirements—and not only in respect of the capacities immediately relevant for dialectic (see e.g. 535a–b, 540a). It is a strange and possibly inconsistent feature of the description of *Kallipolis* that its prospective rulers are to excel in several areas, and be extraordinarily talented in gymnastics and warfare as well as in mathematical disciplines (537b–d). In between the descriptions of the educational programme of the prospective philosopher-rulers, however, there are passages that make general points about human nature, philosophy, and the possible effects of education that must be taken into account in the interpretation of the relationship between dialectic, philosophy, and the role of reason in the just soul.

As we have seen, the activity leading to the highest insight is not always described as "dialectic" with a form of the adjective *dialektikos*; the activity in the passage explaining the simile of the Line is described as an exercise of the power of dialectical conversing, *hē tou dialegesthai dynamis*. The same expression is found at 537d5, in a passage discussing how guardians may be tested in order to discover who will be suited for ruling and for studying dialectic. Here Socrates states that "you must consider, testing them with the power of dialectical conversing (*tē tou dialegesthai dynamei basanizonta*), who is able to release himself from the eyes and the rest of sense and go to that which *is* in itself and accompanies truth." The power of dialectical conversing can, then, lead to insight into "the beginning of everything" and into what each thing is (511b) as well as test the ability of others to obtain such insight. This suggests that dialectical conversing (*to dialegesthai*) may itself be engaged in in differing ways.

This suggestion gains further support from two other passages in Book 7, also concerned with the selection and education of philosopher-rulers. At 532a, we twice find the verb *dialegesthai* in a passage explaining the potential usefulness of mathematical disciplines in turning the soul towards being and preparing it for dialectic, and thus again in a context that makes clear that the verb is used in a specialized rather than a wider, colloquial sense. Socrates suggests that studies in mathematical disciplines may, if pursued in the right way, function as a prelude to the song (*nomos*) that engaging in conversation (*to dialegesthai*) performs (532a1–2, cf. 531c9–d8). Someone who tries by means of conversing (*to dialegesthai*) to grasp what each thing *is*, he further states, may come to the end of the intelligible and grasp by intellection itself that which is good itself (532a5–b2). That this activity of the soul in the realm of the intelligible involves a movement from one stage to the other is underscored by comparison with the image of the cave, with the prisoner's movement up and out of the cave and the changing direction of the prisoner's gaze: "We said that the power of sight at last tries to look at the animals themselves and at stars themselves and then finally at the sun itself" (532a2–5). Socrates calls this achievement of the soul a journey, and asks Glaucon whether he would not call this journey dialectical

(*dialektikē*, 532b4). We should notice that Socrates specifies the manner of engaging in conversation needed for succeeding in grasping what each thing *is* as follows: "by means of argument (*logos*) without the use of any of the senses" (532a6–7). This suggests that one may engage in conversation in other ways, and that doing so does not in itself guarantee that one is on the path to grasping what things are.

The same is implied in a discussion of the manner in which dialectical conversing should be taken up by the prospective philosopher-rulers a little later on. At 537e1–2 Socrates asks Glaucon whether he does not notice how great harm (*kakon*) comes from the present practice of dialectical conversing (*dialegesthai*). Socrates then responds to Glaucon's request for an explanation with a simile—a story of a changeling child (537e–538c)—and when Glaucon asks for an explanation of the simile, his question makes explicit what he, and presumably Socrates, understands by *dialegesthai* here: "But how does this image apply to those who take up arguments? (*alla pē[i] pros tous haptomenous tōn logōn hautē pherei hē eikōn*)" (538c4–5). In the description Socrates gives of the harmful engagement in the practice of conversing, he repeatedly makes clear that this activity centrally involves the use of arguments or accounts (*logos*) (539a–b), and that it may become harmful and dishonourable if those engaging in it centre on contradicting (*antilegein*) and cross-examining (*elenchein*, *exelenchein*) as a kind of play (539b–d). The result may be that they lead both themselves and others into confusion concerning what is fine, just, and good (538d–e, 539b–c), and both "they themselves and the whole activity of philosophy become the object of slander" (539c2–4). Socrates suggests that this risk is greatest for young people, and that more mature people will imitate the one who is "willing to discuss (*dialegesthai*) and consider the truth" and thereby make the practice more honourable instead of dishonourable (539c5–d1).

Perhaps, then, the expression "by the power of dialectical conversing" (*tē[i] tou dialegesthai dynamei*) is intended to be read with a double sense; on the one hand, it designates the use of the capacity to employ arguments in conversation, a capacity that can be exercised in different ways with different results; on the other, it can be understood as designating the full realization of the power of this capacity to lead to insight into the being or essence of things.[11] The implication would be that exercising the capacity to converse in the sense of using arguments will not necessarily realize the power of dialectical conversing of grasping the being of things and obtaining insight into the form of the good.

This accords well with a point made in an earlier passage from Book 5 where the use of the verb *dialegesthai*, however, seems more restrictive. The passage in question is at 454a1–b9, and is interesting for our discussion because it contrasts the activity designated by the verb *dialegesthai* with another activity, quarrelling or strife, designated by the verb *erizein*. Socrates has raised the objection, on behalf of imaginary interlocutors,

that the suggestion that both men and women can serve as guardians in *Kallipolis* goes against their earlier agreement that different natures are suited for, and therefore should be given, different tasks in the city (452e3–453e4). When Glaucon finds the objection hard to dismiss, Socrates exclaims: "Oh Glaucon, […] the power of the contradicting art (*hē dynamis tēs antilogikēs technēs*) is grand" (454a1–2). In explanation he continues:

> …many fall into it even unwillingly and suppose they are not quarreling (*erizein*) but discussing (*dialegesthai*), because they are unable to consider what's said by separating it out into its forms (*eidê*). They pursue contradiction in the mere name (*onoma*) of what is spoken about, using contention (*eris*), not discourse (*dialektos*), with one another.

The relevance of this general point for their present discussion lies in the way the objectors take into account only the mere name "nature" (*physis*), and have not considered "what form of other and same nature, and applying to what, we were distinguishing when we assigned other practices to an other nature and the same ones to the same" (454b4–9).[12]

Here we need only note some points concerning this passage important for understanding dialectic in the *Republic*. As mentioned, the use of *dialegesthai* seems to be more restrictive here than in the passages from Book 7 we have just considered. For Socrates indicates that one is engaged in dialectical conversation (*dialegesthai*) only if one aims at considering what one is discussing according to forms; otherwise one is merely engaged in strife, or eristic. It is highly interesting that Socrates suggests that one may "fall into" the contradicting art unwillingly; the pursuit of contradiction in the mere name of what is spoken about, here termed *erizein* rather than *dialegesthai*, where one uses *eris* rather than *dialektos*, otherwise seems similar to the contradiction and cross-examination pursued willingly, for the sake of play, by those who are said to engage in *dialegesthai* in a harmful manner in Book 7.

This suggests a general conclusion: human beings can—when speaking, presenting arguments or accounts, and having discussions about things—either willingly or unwillingly fail to pursue insight about the thing spoken of, and apparently contradict themselves and others without really doing so, because they do not attend to the truth about things, but concentrate on mere names and on likenesses and differences that are irrelevant to the issue discussed. Moreover, it seems plausible that the passage is meant to suggest that the interlocutors' enquiry into justice aims to be an engagement in conversation (*dialegesthai*, in the restrictive sense of 454a), using *dialektos* rather than *eris*. In fact, the interlocutors' enquiry share traits central to dialectical studies; it aims at discovering what justice is, it aims to do this through arguments or accounts, without

the use of the senses, and it seems to aim at a synoptical view, in the sense of seeing different aspects of justice together and understanding the connections between them.

It therefore seems reasonable to understand the enquiry of the *Republic* as a whole as an example of a dialectical "journey" akin to the one the future philosopher-rulers are supposed to complete, but which can be engaged in without being a philosopher-ruler or having undergone the education prescribed for them. At the same time, it seems likely that the enquiry does not live up to the requirements of the highest dialectical insight, and thus probably does not fully realize the power of dialectical conversing even if it is an example of dialectical conversation. In fact, Socrates suggests that obtaining insight into the idea of the good is beyond the reach of their present enquiry (506d–e).[13] However this may be, it seems likely that the enquiry results in some kind of insight into justice, the human soul, and a whole range of other subjects that may be useful for the interlocutors in their choice of actions, and more generally, choice of life.

If the above interpretation moves along the right lines, it suggests that dialectic in the sense of the highest and most advanced study and understanding is the most advanced and successful performance of capacities belonging to the human soul in virtue of its capacity for conversing and learning. I suggest that these capacities both belong to the reasoning part of the soul, *to logistikon*. This might seem to support the interpretation the chapter argues against; for some may find it reasonable that dialectic is wisdom, the virtue of the reasoning part, and that justice requires the virtue of all the three parts of the soul, including wisdom, and therefore also requires dialectic.[14] But could the insight obtained by the interlocutors in the *Republic* (and perhaps also by perceptive readers of the dialogue) not also count as a kind of wisdom concerning what is beneficial for "each part [of the soul] and for the whole composed of the community of these three" (see 442c5–7)?[15] Let us take a closer look at the description of the reasoning element and its role in the just soul, and consider how the description of dialectic may fit into the praise of justice even if dialectic is not regarded as simply identical with wisdom.

The Challenge to Praise Justice and Justice as a State of the Soul

In Book 4, at 443c–444a, Socrates suggests that justice is to be defined not with reference to external action, but with reference to activities internal to the soul, and that justice consists in each part of the soul performing its own task. In the description of the just soul, Socrates does not focus on what each of the parts does when it performs its own task but on how the just man acts within his soul and on the relation between the parts of the

soul. He also suggests that actions have a direct effect on the condition of the soul. The description of the man with a just soul goes as follows:

> He doesn't let each part in him mind others' business or the three classes in the soul meddle with each other, but really sets his own house in good order and rules himself; he arranges himself, becomes his own friend, and harmonizes the three elements, exactly like three notes in a harmonic scale, lowest, highest, and middle. And if there are some parts in between, he binds them together and becomes entirely one from many, moderate and harmonized. Then, and only then, he acts, if he does act in some way—either concerning the acquisition of money, or the care of the body, or something political, or concerning private contracts. In all these actions he believes and names an action just and fine that preserves and helps to produce this condition, and wisdom (*sophia*) the knowledge (*epistēmē*) that supervises this action, while he believes and names an action unjust that undoes this condition, and lack of learning (*amathia*), in its turn, the opinion (*doxa*) that supervises this action.
>
> (443d2–44a2)

We can note that it is left open what the knowledge (*epistēmē*) that is to be called wisdom and which is set over just action consists in more exactly. We can also note that the description need not, in contrast to what is often assumed, imply that the just person has to possess this knowledge—any more than that he must possess the opinion that supervises unjust action, even though he holds it to be and names it *amathia*, lack of learning. What the description implies is that the just person recognizes just action as the domain of *epistēmē* rather than of *doxa*, and calls the kind of *epistēmē* in question *sophia*.

It is also noteworthy that the passage implies that very different kinds of actions can help establish and preserve the just condition of the soul where reason rules, and that they can also disturb or undo this condition. Finally, we should notice that the range of actions in which the just person may come to engage includes types of action in which the philosopher-rulers will not engage, namely the acquisition of money and actions concerned with private contracts: the principle of division of labour fundamental in *Kallipolis* makes it clear that these will only be engaged in by the third class, the producers (369e3–c6, 434a3–c10). So, although this description of justice may well apply to the philosopher-rulers, it is clear that it may also apply to others.

One might object that the description is found before the philosophers have entered the stage, and that the accounts of justice and of the other virtues are transformed once philosophy enters the picture. But the *Republic* does not end with the description of the *Kallipolis* and its

philosopher-rulers, and neither does this description mark the end of the argument intended to demonstrate the preferability of the just life. In Book 2 Glaucon and Adeimantus ask for an argument relevant for anyone considering which life to choose, and throughout the dialogue Socrates clearly understands the challenge he is posed as a challenge to show that everyone should choose the just life. A point in support of this view is that Socrates, as we have seen, repeatedly states that their enquiry into justice is of great importance for all the interlocutors (e.g. 344d5–e3 and 578c5–7).

Another is the fact that the argument in favour of the just life does not stop with the description of the philosopher-rulers. The description of *Kallipolis* is introduced as an aid to discerning justice in the soul. It may certainly be intended to serve other purposes too, but when it has been brought to an end, Socrates continues by comparing various degenerate regimes in Books 8 and 9. Here he goes through four kinds, looking first at the way they are realized in cities and then in souls, a procedure he already suggested they should follow at the start of the enquiry into justice in Book 2. Moreover, as G. R. F. Ferrari (2005/2003) has emphasized, when moving from the description of the city to the description of the soul, Socrates never suggests that they should take the rulers in each city as examples of the soul with a regime corresponding to that of the city; for example, he never points to the leaders of timocracy as examples of people with timocratic souls. He rather treats the city as a paradigm, of which some aspects are used to describe the corresponding soul. And the same is in fact the case with respect to *Kallipolis*—Socrates never points to the philosopher-rulers as examples of people with just souls, but states that the just soul will be like the city they rule (e.g. 541b3), and thus have a structure of ruling and being ruled like it.

At the end of Book 9, when the preferability of having a just rather than an unjust soul is treated as established, Socrates suggests that the one who wishes to be just can aim to establish a just regime in the soul, taking the good city they have described as a pattern. A little earlier, when explaining why it is not profitable to get away with injustice, Socrates has suggested that even persons who have vicious and unjust souls may change their psychic regime, becoming virtuous and just (591a5–b7). He suggests that when someone unjust is caught and punished his whole soul is brought to its best nature, "acquiring moderation (*sophrosynē*) and justice (*dikaiosynē*) accompanied by prudence (*phronēsis*)" (591b5). The man who has sense, that is, *ho noun echon*, Socrates next suggests, will "strain all of his powers to that end as long as he lives […] honouring the studies that will make his soul such" (591c1–3). In addition, Socrates states, this person will "look fixedly at the regime within him […] and guard against upsetting anything in it" (591e1–3). When we look at the kinds of actions Socrates points to in which the man of sense must take

care in order to preserve the inner regime, these are remarkably similar to those mentioned in Book 4; first care of the body, then acquisition of money and expenditures, and finally things to do with honour in private and public. Whatever the introduction of philosophy and the description of the philosopher-rulers that have come between the description in Book 4 and this passage in Book 9 have added to the picture of justice, the description of the just state of the soul still applies more widely than to philosopher-rulers, and could even apply to a reformed but formerly unjust soul.

Further, at the very end of the dialogue, while relating the myth of Er, Socrates pauses to explain the myth's lesson in a comment addressed to Glaucon, and makes an exhortation ostensibly addressed to himself and his interlocutors, but which also seems to be quite generally intended. The choice of life is "the whole risk for a human being" (618b7–8), and therefore, "each of us must, to the neglect of other studies (*mathēmata*), above all see to it that he is a seeker and student (*mathēsēs*) of the study by which he might be able to learn (*mathein*) and find out who will make him capable (*dynaton*) and knowledgeable (*epistēmona*)", in order that he may "distinguish the good and the bad life, and so everywhere and always choose the better from among those that are possible" (618b8–c5). Taking into account (*analogizomenon*, 618c5) "the things just mentioned and how in combination and separately they affect the virtue of a life", he will "be able to draw a conclusion, and choose—in looking off toward the nature of the soul—between the worse and the better life, calling worse the one that leads it toward becoming more unjust and better the one that leads it to becoming juster" (618c5–e3). Likewise, in the dialogue's final paragraph, when Socrates encourages his interlocutors to be persuaded by him that the soul is immortal, and practice justice with prudence in every way (*dikaiosynē meta phronēseōs panti tropō[i] epitēdeusomen*, 621c5), this is presented as something that is possible, perhaps for everyone, and certainly for all the interlocutors.

The question is, then, what are the studies (*mathēmata*, 618c1) in which Socrates encourages his interlocutors and anyone of sense to engage? If they are identical with the highly demanding studies in dialectic described in Books 6 and 7, and the requirement for reason's rule is the insight at which these studies aim, Socrates' recommendation of the just life clearly breaks down. Still, if we look for a different explanation of the requirements of reason's rule, it is preferable to find a connection between the description of reason's rule in the just soul, the description of the philosophers' studies and insight, and that of dialectic as the capacity and method enabling the highest insight into what things are. To this end, we will now look at some descriptions of reason as a part of the soul and at some characterizations of philosophy in different parts of the dialogue.

To logistikon and Philosophy

The rational part of the soul (or reason), *to logistikon*, is introduced along with the appetitive and the spirited parts (or appetite and spirit), *to epithymētikon* and *to thymoeides*, in Book 4, as the result of an argument that there are three forms (*eidē*) in the soul corresponding to the three classes of the good city. *To logistikon* is first characterized in terms that employ the verb *manthanein*, to learn or to understand. At 436a8–b3 Socrates asks whether it is with the same thing the soul acts in several cases; whether it learns (*manthanein*), becomes spirited or angry (*thymousthai*), and desires the pleasures of food, drink, and sex with things that are three or with the soul as a whole each time.[16] The conclusion will be that the soul performs the three kinds of activity with three things in it respectively; it learns by means of *to logistikon*, becomes angry by means of *to thymoeides*, and desires the various pleasures mentioned by means of *to epithymētikon*. The next characterization, at 439c10–d2, indicates that it is by means of reason that we engage in the activity of reasoning or calculating, *logismos*, the same activity which is implied by the name *to logistikon*, "that which calculates or reasons". We have already seen that Socrates in Book 4, when explaining why it is proper for reason to rule in the soul, states that it is in virtue of reason that we may become wise and come to possess knowledge of the benefit of all the parts of the soul and of the whole soul. The examples used in the argument concerning the division of the soul further suggest that it is by means of reason we engage in calculation about better and worse (441b6–c2) in various practical situations, for example when deeming that it is better not to drink even if one is thirsty (439c3–d1), and better not to kill someone straight away even if one is angry (see 441b3–c2). In such situations reason may also be a force in the soul in the sense of drawing it towards or pulling it away from a course of action, and either master appetite or spirit in a case of conflict, or be mastered by them. The reasoning activities we get examples of in Book 4 seem mainly practically oriented, and even if we are told that it is in virtue of this part of the soul that we learn or understand and obtain knowledge and wisdom, there is not much hint that it may also enable one to obtain the insight into being that the philosophers strive for.[17] In the light of these points, a case for several conceptions of reason being in play in the dialogue might seem strong.

Nevertheless, when Socrates ends his description of *Kallipolis* and turns to the bad regimes in city and soul, the three parts of the soul again take centre stage, and this makes clear that the conception of reason in terms of *to logistikon* has not been left behind. The changes from one regime in the soul to another are to a large extent explained in terms of the three parts and the relations between them, each bad regime in the soul exemplifying a state where reason does not rule. When the competition between the five regimes in the soul, that is, between the fully virtuous,

and thus also just regime and the four bad and vicious regimes, is settled and the person with the just soul declared the happiest, Socrates proceeds to offer what he calls a second proof of the preferability of the just regime ruled by reason. Here too the three parts of the soul are central to the argument. Each part is assigned its own desires, loves, and rule, and *to logistikon* is characterized as learning-loving and wisdom-loving (it is *philomathes* and *philosophos*) and "as always entirely directed toward knowing the truth as it is" (581b6–7).

Corresponding to the three kinds of rule in the soul by the three parts, Socrates suggests that there are three main kinds of people leading three kinds of life, and each will prefer its own pleasures: the one ruled by appetite will prefer the pleasures of gain and wealth, the one ruled by spirit the pleasures of honour, and the one ruled by the philosophical part the pleasures of knowing the truth and of learning (582c4–e3). This passage is often read as supporting the view that the just man must be a philosopher as described in the central books. But the way the argument proceeds suggests that this is not the point Socrates is making. He first argues that the man in whose soul reason rules is the best judge of the three lives, and that his judgement that the life ruled by reason is best and most pleasant is therefore the correct one. The reason given is that, to judge finely, one must judge by means of experience, prudence, and argument (*empeiria*, *phronēsis*, *logos*, 582a3–4). The man whose soul is ruled by reason has experienced all three types of pleasure, while the others have little or no experience of the pleasures of learning (582a7–d2). Socrates adds that only this man has gained his experience with prudence (*meta phronēseōs*) (582d4–5), and, further, that argument is the instrument of the philosopher rather than of the gain-lover or the honour-lover (582d7–13). Since what is being judged should be judged by experience, prudence, and argument, the things the lover of wisdom and the lover of argument (*ho philologos*) praise are "most true" (*alēthestatos*, 582e8–9).

On this basis, Socrates concludes: "of the three pleasures, the most pleasant would belong to that part of the soul with which we learn, and the man among us in whom this part rules has the most pleasant life" (583a1–3). Again we can note that this is presented as a possibility for the people present. Socrates states that this marks a second victory for justice: "Twice the just man has been victorious over the unjust one" (583b1–2). He then proposes that justice can win a third victory, and argues a third time that the just life is the most pleasant. We need not go into the details of this argument but should note that the conclusion is that the rule of reason results in each part enjoying the best and truest pleasures it can enjoy, because, it is implied, reason is able to guide the other parts of the soul towards these (586d4–e2).[18] When a different part takes control, in contrast, it will not be able to discover its own true pleasure, and will compel the other parts to pursue a pleasure that is alien and untrue (587a4–6).

In summing up, we can observe that even if reason is called philosophic, and its love of learning and truth is emphasized, the main focus in these passages is on reason's activity in relation to the other parts and the kind of life the rule of reason will provide, namely a pleasant one. The arguments concerning pleasure also suggest one important explanation why this is so: reason is able to discern and judge and find the truth about things in a way the other parts cannot.[19]

We now have an overview of the characterization of *to logistikon*, which involves both a set of abilities—of calculating and reasoning, discerning and judging—and a set of desires and what one might call a motive force; reason is able to object to the fulfilment of desires of appetite and spirit, and itself desires knowledge and truth. When considering what is required for the rule of reason, the characterizations of reason can seem to point to distinct aims; on the one hand towards the demanding requirements of philosophical insight, on the other towards something less demanding with regard to intellectual understanding, such as an efficient practical orientation where reason discerns the best pleasures and seeks to find the best actions in various situations and the other parts follow reason's decisions harmoniously. As mentioned, a solution to this apparent tension between different aims has been to suggest that the dialogue ends up with a two-level account of virtue, one for each aim, where only the full, complete virtue requires philosophy and knowledge, and a lower-level virtue can be secured by the harmonious habits of the soul in combination with correct opinion supplied by others. But this line of interpretation faces two important obstacles.

First, at the end of Book 9, when Socrates suggests that the man of sense will aim to guard the regime in his soul,[20] and Glaucon comments that this man will not be willing to take part in politics, Socrates replies that he would in "his own city". Glaucon takes this city to be *Kallipolis*, "the one that has its place in speeches, since I don't suppose it exists anywhere on earth" (592a10). Socrates now suggests that it is perhaps in heaven, laid out as a pattern "for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees", and states that it makes no difference whether this city is or will be somewhere (592b1–4). This demonstrates that neither being brought up like a philosopher-ruler nor living in *Kallipolis* is necessary for becoming just; and Socrates does not suggest that the just state of the soul that comes about in this way is substantially inferior to another kind of justice at a higher level.

It might be argued that this suggests that philosophy is not necessary for justice and that we must conclude, however unsatisfactory this may seem, that the description of the philosophers is not, after all, relevant to the argument about justice at the level of the soul. One would still, however, face the second obstacle: In the myth of Er, at the very end of the dialogue in Book 10, Socrates relates Er's tale how the souls in the afterlife choose the life they will lead next. The tale shows how the choices the

souls make are regularly influenced by the lives these souls have already led, and by their experience in the afterlife of punishment if they have previously been vicious (619d1–5, 620a2–3). The soul who got to choose a new life first, and thus had the largest number of lives to choose from, Socrates relates, "immediately chose the greatest tyranny, and due to folly and gluttony chose without having considered things adequately, and it escaped his notice that eating his own children and other evils were fated to be part of his life". When he becomes aware of this, he blames not himself for his bad choice, but chance and everything else (619b7–c6). What is worth noting, however, is that this soul is said to have come down from heaven, "having lived in an orderly regime in his former life, participating in virtue by habit, without philosophy" (619c6–d1). This is of course a story, a myth,[21] but it clearly indicates that merely participating in virtue by habit without philosophy will not be enough to secure a just state of the soul or the happiness the whole argument of the *Republic* is intended to show that such a state will bring about. For, that a just person will not choose injustice, and certainly not tyranny, is an initial premise underlying the challenge in the dialogue (343c1–344c9).

So what are the consequences for our understanding of philosophy? Is Socrates implying that the just life is the life of the philosopher-rulers after all, only obtainable for the exceptional few? Plato lets Socrates describe philosophy in many different ways in different dialogues (see the discussion in Krüger 1939/1992, vii–viii), and within the *Republic* itself, philosophy and philosophizing are wide terms that cover a range of meanings. The first time a related term is mentioned in the dialogue, namely the adjective *philosophos*, it is employed to characterize dogs. The dog, Socrates claims, has a truly philosophic trait because "it distinguishes friendly from hostile looks by nothing other than having learned the one and being ignorant of the other". On this account, he continues, it must be learning-loving (*philomathes*, 376b6).

This points to one basic meaning of philosophy that implies primarily an attitude and a motivation—the love of learning, knowledge, and wisdom, and the desire to seek it, without a clear requirement of success in this pursuit. This wider meaning stands in contrast to philosophy as pursued by the philosopher as dialectician—from the description in the *Republic* it seems clear that the dialectician must not only be willing and eager, but also able to attain insight into the accounts of things that really are. The well-known distinction between philosophers and non-philosophers from Book 5, however, seems to place the philosophers somewhere in between these extremes and reflect something from both of them. There the philosophers are first characterized as lovers of all learning and as desirous (*epithymētai*) of all of wisdom (475b), and then said to acknowledge and be related to what *is*, and is knowable, and recognize both what is in itself and what participates in it without confusing them (476c6–d1). The philosopher's thought (*dianoia*, 476d4) is knowledge or

insight (*gnōmē*, 476d4), while non-philosophers, who acknowledge only what is becoming, only have *doxa*, opinion (476d5).

This passage from Book 5 might still give the impression that human beings come in two versions, philosophers who see the intelligible forms, and have knowledge, and non-philosophers who see only sensible things, and cannot hope to attain anything but opinion. But this picture is modified in the following books. In Books 6 and 7 the "part"[22] in the human soul that can reason, distinguish, learn, and acquire knowledge is described as present in each soul, but also as turned in different directions and performing its reasoning in very different ways, depending on the overall direction or condition of the whole soul. Two passages in particular make explicit that the "instrument" of the soul with which a philosopher may obtain the highest knowledge is present in each soul. In the first, 518c–519b, Socrates suggests that education does not consist, as some claim, in putting "into the soul knowledge that isn't in it", and that their present argument indicates

> that this power (*dynamis*) [presumably the power of learning] is in the soul of each, and that the instrument (*organon*) with which each learns (*manthanein*) […] must be turned around from that which is coming into being together with the whole soul until it is able to endure looking at that which is and the brightest part of that which is.
>
> (518b8–d1)

About people who are said to be vicious but wise Socrates further suggests that, had they been given a different upbringing and education, and been turned toward the true things, "this same part of the same human being would also see" these things "most sharply", in the way they see the things towards which they are now turned (519a1–b5).

The second passage, 527d6–e3, is part of the discussion of the philosopher-rulers' preliminary education in mathematical disciplines, where Socrates again explains to Glaucon the point of these studies:

> It's scarcely an ordinary thing, rather it's hard, to trust that in these studies a certain instrument (*organon*) of everyone's soul—one that is destroyed and blinded by other practices—is purified and rekindled, an instrument more important to save than ten thousand eyes. For with it alone is truth seen.[23]

Returning to the question how philosophy and dialectic may fit into the account of justice and the rule of reason, I suggest that there is a sense in which the rule of reason appears to require a philosophical attitude or orientation, even though it does not require the highest philosophical or dialectical insight. We have seen that the distinction between

philosophers and non-philosophers in Book 5 hinges on a willingness or lack thereof to acknowledge that there is something that is beautiful or just in itself, and not only many beautiful or just things. In the description of the just state of the soul in Book 4, the man in whose soul reason rules is said to acknowledge that wisdom is the *epistēmē* set over just action, and this seems to imply the acknowledgement that justice is not merely the domain of *doxa*, but that there is something that is just in itself, of which there can be *epistēmē*. In this sense then, the just person could be regarded as philosophical according to the distinction in Book 5. Moreover, it seems that the man whose soul is ruled by reason will seek to learn the truth about what is just and what is beneficial for all parts of the soul as well as the whole, which is what is called wisdom, instead of just accepting what appears pleasant. In this way, then, reason in the just soul can be said to live up to its description as the philosophical part that loves learning, truth, and wisdom, in a way reason in a soul that is not ruled by reason does not.

By way of conclusion, one may suggest that within the conception of philosophy found in the *Republic*, two main strands may be distinguished. On the one hand, there is a wider meaning that we might call more existential, according to which philosophy is first of all an attitude or orientation, resulting in a certain way of life. On the other, there is a narrower meaning that we might call more technical or scientific, connected to the exercise of philosophy as a specific kind of activity in accordance with the principles of certain methods, of which the most advanced is called *dialektikē* in Book 7. Philosophy in the first sense, it seems, is less intellectually demanding than in the second sense, and a possibility even without possessing the abilities necessary for, and the insight that may follow from, the science of dialectic. On the other hand, it is perhaps more demanding in an existential sense, since it requires a drive to search for the truth and a reorientation, in the sense of considering whether how things appear and how things are thought to be are how they really are. It is philosophy in this first sense that is central to the argument in favour of the just life. Philosophy in the second sense is important at the political level of the argument, where a main aim is to make plausible that political rule too is the domain of *epistēmē* rather than *doxa*, and that ruling should not be taken on lightly, should be based on knowledge, and be motivated by the desire for knowledge about justice and the good rather than desire for rule and honour. But both kinds of activities stem from the same general capacity that belongs to the reasoning part of the soul, and renders us able to learn.

Right before Socrates presents the claim that philosophers must rule in *Kallipolis* in Book 5, he responds to Glaucon's question how the good city can be brought about by reminding him that the investigation of justice was carried out for the sake of a pattern, and then suggests that the description of justice itself, and of the perfectly just man, can each

function as a pattern, *paradeigma*, which may be useful even if they can never be realized, since one may attempt to liken oneself to the pattern, thereby becoming just and happy accordingly (471c4–d1). This is a strong indication that the conception of justice in the dialogue does not imply that justice is divided between distinct levels, but rather occurs on a continuum, increasing or decreasing by degrees. It further implies that the good city too is somehow a pattern relevant to understanding the just man.[24] On this background we may suggest that some aspects of the description of dialectic are intended to shed light on the function of reason in general, and may be intended as a pattern, in the sense of an ideal at which to aim. We have seen that a main distinguishing trait of the kind of reasoning performed on the highest level through the power of dialectical conversing, which sets it apart from other thought concerned with the intelligible, including scientific thought, is that it investigates hypotheses instead of leaving them untouched and deducing on their basis. This can also be regarded as an aim for reason in the just soul even if its reasoning is not related to this highest level of the intelligible, in the sense that it should not merely accept what is thought just or what appears good, but attempt to discern what is really good, independently of what other parts in the soul suggest and even of what is customary in an orderly society. No doubt not every just soul will be able to realize the power of dialectical conversing fully in the sense of fully understanding the idea of the good and its relation to being and knowledge. But reason's ability to attain to a grasp of the good, beyond what merely appears good, offers the possibility of becoming just, and calls for philosophy and for exercise of the power of dialectical conversing in the sense that there is always work for reason to do in seeking wisdom and the truth about the right manner of acting and living one's life.[25]

Notes

1 This designation has become common based on Socrates' use of the following expression at 527c2: "…*en tē[i] kallipolei*…". Here we will not consider the question how many cities are described in Books 2–7 (for discussion see e.g. Reeve 2006/1988, ch. 4).

2 Of the terms used of the "parts" of the soul, *eidos* is the more frequent (e.g. 435c1, e2,437d3, 439e2, 440e8, 504a4), and *genos* (441c7, 443d5) and *meros* (442c1, 44b3, 586e4) are also employed. Most often, however, Socrates does not use a single term corresponding to "part" or "kind", but rather expressions such as "that of the soul which…", or the expressions employed in the passages where the psychic parts are introduced (*to logistikon*, *to epithymētikon, to thymoeides*, see 439d5–8, 441a2). In this chapter "part" is used in a broad sense, without the intent to imply anything substantial about the character of the division or the ontological status of these "parts". For discussion of such questions, see e.g. Bobonich 2002, Lorenz 2006, Shields 2010, and Santas 2013.

3 Translations from the *Republic* are, unless otherwise noted, by Allan Bloom (1991/1968), sometimes modified for greater clarity and relevance to the argument.
4 See e.g. Reeve 2006/1988, 260 and Irwin 1995, 350.
5 At 536d4–6 Socrates implies that the studies in mathematical disciplines they have set out for the philosopher-rulers are *required* as a preparation for dialectic (… *hēn tēs dialektikēs dei propaideuthenai*) and must be started in childhood. Those who complete the educational programme with the best results, including studies in dialectic, must toil in the tasks of ruling for fifteen years before they are "led to the end" and are "compelled to look" at the good itself (540a6–9), and it would seem odd to delay their obtaining this insight for so long if the practical experience of ruling is not also in some way a necessary preparation for this last step.
6 The discussion is from the outset framed as being about "the just man", *ho dikaios anēr* (see 335b2, e4, 343d2, 353e10, 435b1–3, 444a4–6, 472b7–c1, c4–d2, and 613a3-7). In this author's opinion it is implied in the dialogue that the argument concerns the souls of human beings in general (see e.g. 452e2–456b9); the use of the expression "the just man" thus reflects the expressions in the Greek text, not an agreement with the commentators who hold Plato to believe that women's capacity for philosophy and justice is limited (for an example, see Bloom 1991/1968, 383).
7 David Sachs (1963) advanced a famous complaint that the argument contains a fallacy of irrelevance that has been much commented on in the literature; the problem pointed to here is different, however. *Pace* Sachs, it is not a problem for the argument that Socrates praises a state of the soul rather than the nonperformance of actions commonly considered unjust, but it would be a problem if he praised a state of the soul that is in principle impossible to attain for most people.
8 This line of interpretation is expressed perhaps most explicitly by Julia Annas (2009/1981, 136–7), see also e.g. Cross & Woozley 1964, 126–7, Irwin 1995, 236, Cooper 1999, 141, esp. n. 8, and Bobonich 2002, 7–8, 42–5. An exception to the tendency of overlooking the problem is Santas 2013, 183; Gerasimos Santas here notes that the view that only philosophers can be just and, more generally, virtuous, which he calls "ethical elitism", seems to him to be "grossly paradoxical and to wreck Plato's argument that justice makes a man happy or happier than injustice".
9 See e.g. Irwin 1995, 230–5, 350–3, Gill 1996, Kamtekar 1998, and Wilberding 2009. Annas (2009/1981, 126) also seems to conclude that those who do not belong to the guardian class are "just in some reduced sense".
10 For further discussion of the significance of the use of this expression and expressions describing the soul's redirection and liberation, see Vasilis Politis' contribution to this volume.
11 This suggests an understanding of the expression that is similar to, although not identical with, the one argued for in Dixsaut 2001, 70–2; see also the discussion in Politis' chapter in this anthology.
12 For further discussion of the significance of this passage for the understanding of Plato's conception of dialectic, see Larsen 2021. We should note that this passage is found before the introduction of the philosopher-rulers in the good city.
13 Moreover, regarding the question what justice is, it seems that the account of the soul relied upon in the enquiry, which Socrates repeatedly characterizes as imperfect (435c–d, 504a–b), is not investigated again by way of the longer road required for "the finest possible look" (504b).

14 It is commonly assumed that justice as a state of the soul requires the other virtues, i.e. wisdom, courage, and moderation, since these are regarded as necessary for enabling each part of the soul "to do its own" within the soul (see e.g. 2009/1981, 132, Irwin 1995, 224–9). Here we cannot go into the complex discussion of the relation between the virtues; for a different interpretation of the relationship between the virtues with emphasis on the discussion of the degenerate regimes in Books 8 and 9, see Ausland 2013.
15 This is not to suggest that such wisdom is necessarily *epistēme* in the sense of the term at 533c8–534a5.
16 A few lines above, Socrates has suggested that love of learning (*to philomathes*) is characteristic of one of the forms (*eidos*) that are in the city that also are in each of us (435d9–436a1).
17 Several scholars have argued that there is a radical change in the conception of reason from Book 4 to the central books, seeing this, in different ways, as part of the explanation of an apparent or real misfit between the discussion in the books up to Book 4 and the later discussion. In Annas 2009 the account of reason in Book 4 is regarded as "inadequate and potentially misleading", since it seems to assign it no more than "the limited 'Humean' role of organizing desires" (140, cf. 126). A different approach is taken by G. R. F. Ferrari (2007, 165–7) and David Roochnik (2003, 17–20), who also, each in different ways, observe differences in the account of reason in different parts of the dialogue, but regard these as part of the complex development of the argument.
18 The subject performing the guiding here is "*to phronimon*" (586d7), which it seems reasonable to understand as designating reason, the philosophic part of the soul; see the parallel use of "*to philosophon*" at 586e4.
19 This is in accordance with the description of the virtuous soul in Book 4, whose wisdom includes knowledge of what is beneficial both for the three psychic parts and for the whole soul (442c4–7).
20 It is clear from 591b1–7 that this inner "regime" (*hê en hautô politiea*) is the virtuous regime in the soul, where the whole soul is "brought to its best nature, acquiring moderation and justice accompanied by prudence".
21 For a discussion of the importance of the use of stories or myths as parts of dialectical enquiries in Plato's dialogues, see Catherine Rowett's contribution to this anthology.
22 In Books 5, 6, and 7 Socrates does not explicitly rely on the account of the tripartite soul developed in Book 4 or the language employed there of the soul's parts, except for a short reference at 504a, where he implies that the account is imperfect.
23 That there is a common capacity for reasoning and knowledge in everyone, that may lead a philosophical nature to the highest knowledge, but is most often exercised in other reasoning activities, is likewise the implication of the image of the cave; for it is with the same sense of sight and the same eyes that the released prisoner is able to see outside the cave and within (514a–516c). How well he does varies, according as his eyes become accustomed to the conditions inside or outside of the cave, a point of the image that is explicitly transferred to the soul at 518a–b.
24 As we have seen above, this is also clearly indicated at 592b1–2.
25 Thanks are due to Hayden W. Ausland and Kristian Larsen, who both read an earlier version of the chapter and provided helpful comments and suggestions.

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5 Elenchus and the Method of Division in the *Sophist*

Cristina Ionescu

The *Sophist* is often read as staging a stark contrast between Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger as far as their aims, temperaments, and respective methods of search are concerned. Traditionally, scholars have taken one or the other side of the debate, privileging the Stranger over Socrates (Robinson 1941), or privileging Socrates over the Stranger (Gonzalez 2000; McCoy 2007). Instead of looking at the contrasts between Socrates and the Stranger, some of which remain, indeed, real, I want to focus on the continuity and complementarity that exist between their respective methods of search, Socrates' elenchus and the Stranger's dialectical method of collection and division. Contrary to those claiming that Plato recommends a replacement of Socratic elenchus with the Stranger's method of division (Stenzel 1931; Ryle 1939; Robinson 1941), or to those claiming that Plato regards Socrates' elenchus as the truly philosophical approach opposed to the sophistic tactic of division practiced by the Stranger (Ambuel 2007), I argue that the dialogue encourages us, readers, to see the mutually beneficial effects that elenchus and division have on one another and the positive results that follow from combining these two approaches. I do this by basically showing that and how the Stranger intertwines the use of elenchus with his method of division in his search for the sophist. I begin by first providing a rough outline of how elenchus and division are portrayed and used in the *Sophist*, and then I turn to showing how they enforce and support one another, especially when they are employed on the basis of insight into the communion of kinds. Elenctic refutations are all the more successful when practiced with an understanding of the communion of kinds; and the more purified we are through self-examination and through understanding of which kinds combine and which don't, the readier we are to refine and revise earlier divisions. In addition to contributing to our understanding of the unity of the *Sophist*, my present attempt also shows that Platonic dialectic is not reducible to one logical method of reasoning or another but is rather a complex philosophical approach that combines several methods of inquiry and that allows itself to be shaped and guided along the way

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both by the object of investigation as well as by the respective characters of the interlocutors engaged in it.

Part I: Elenchus and The Method of Division

Contrasts between Socrates' and the Stranger's temperaments and approaches are signaled throughout this dialogue. Socrates prefers to engage in one-on-one conversations with anyone whatsoever, and even prefers interlocutors who repeatedly challenge his views, so that he may refine them, as he does with Simmias and Cebes in the *Phaedo*, while the Stranger prefers long monologues and engages in question-and-answer approaches only when he has the opportunity to deal with compliant, docile, easy to handle interlocutors (217c–e). Furthermore, Socrates' elenchus tends to be primarily a negative method that signals inconsistencies, whereas division is primarily a positive heuristic method of discovery. Finally, when Socrates uses elenchus, he is usually explicitly concerned with issues of moral character and with distinctions between better and worse, while division, at least according to the Stranger's own account of using it in this dialogue, is only concerned with distinguishing like from like, and not also better from worse (227b, 227d–230e).[1] While all these contrasts are real, a closer look at their respective methods shows that there is nothing intrinsic to the methods themselves that prevents their useful collaboration and also that their joint work assists our progress towards knowledge.

[a] Elenchus

I take elenchus to be primarily the method of cross-examination which Socrates frequently employs throughout Plato's dialogues along these lines: (a) Socrates' interlocutor proposes a thesis; (b) in his attempt to test this thesis, Socrates secures the interlocutor's agreement to further premises; from this point on one or the other of the following scenarios can happen: either (c) Socrates shows that the initial thesis leads to inconsistency when combined with other beliefs of his interlocutor, hence the initial thesis is refuted unless the interlocutor chooses to discard at least one of the inconsistent beliefs; or, (d) on those occasions when no inconsistency is revealed in step (c), the initial thesis is considered to have passed the test, since elenchus literally means "test" in a broad sense and not strictly "refutation" (see also Vlastos 1983, 39–40; Lesher 2002, 19–35; Tarrant 2002, 61–77). In the *Apology* we are told that Socrates cross-examines his own beliefs also, not only those of his interlocutors. Part of what makes Socrates' beliefs strong is their repeated testing and passing of examinations (*Grg.* 508e–509a). In the *Sophist* cross-examination is described as follows:

> They cross-examine (*elenchein*) someone when he thinks he's saying something though he's saying nothing. Then, since his opinions

> will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize them. They collect (*sunagontes*) his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects.
>
> (230b–c)[2]

The main features of this approach are depicted in the sixth definition of the sophist.[3] Proceeding by means of division, the Stranger identifies elenchus as an instruction that purifies our souls of conceit of knowledge through cross-examination. This typifies the new characterization of sophistry, carefully qualified as sophistry of noble descent (*gennaia sophistikē*), and widely accepted as a characterization of Socrates' own art of cross-examination.[4]

Scholars who don't accept this as a characterization of Socrates' own art emphasize the fact that, while for Plato's Socrates ignorance is always intimately connected with vice and regarded as a source of vice, here ignorance and vice are separated as two kinds of psychic evil to be treated by two distinct arts. However, a careful reading of the text shows that, while at first purification from vice through correction (*kolastikē*) is sharply distinguished from purification from ignorance through education, the divide between the two is later softened. Correction is seen to play the role for the soul that medicine plays for the body, while education is seen to play for the soul a role analogous to the role of gymnastics for the body. Yet the Stranger's later remark, that those who purify the soul through cross-examination are like doctors purging the body before recommending administration of food (230c3), seriously softens the earlier divide between purging the soul of wickedness and purging it of ignorance (Gooch 1971, 124–33). As Paul W. Gooch remarks, admonition (*nouthetētikē*) works more directly on the emotional and, in general, irrational elements of the soul, while purification of ignorance works on those elements indirectly by bringing the irrational elements in harmony through pointing out inconsistencies to the rational part and working on eliminating those (1971, 130). Ignorance is thus seen as both ugliness and disease in the soul. The rest of the division shows also that purging ignorance enables virtue. Thus, the Stranger says that, when someone is shown that he upholds contradictory ideas, he will become angry with himself and gentle towards others, thereby cultivating modesty (231d1). Ignorance understood as conceit of knowledge is then not a necessary condition of vice, but only a sufficient condition of it. The fact that ignorance and vice end up separated on two branches of division does not exclude the possibility that they are connected as a possible cause and its effect. The type of division practiced by the Stranger has this limitation that it merely indicates that two kinds are different, but it does not convey anything else about the relationship between them.

[b] The Method of Division

The dialectical method proposed by the Stranger in this dialogue requires that we start from a comprehensive kind and divide it into two constitutive subclasses, moving from a more comprehensive whole towards its more specific parts. We are to continue this process by dividing in the next step one of the subclasses obtained earlier and to keep doing this until we reach the species that we have been trying to define – until we isolate the full and complete specific difference of the *definiendum* (235c, 264e). The Stranger puts the method to use from the start and only later provides its guidelines. He explains that the method is to be applied at several levels of generality, as we are to "chase a thing through both the particular and the general" (235c), and later adds:

> Then let's try again to take the kind we've posited and cut it in two. Let's go ahead and always follow the right-hand part of what we've cut and hold onto things that the sophist is associated with until we strip away everything that he has in common with other things. Then when we've left his own peculiar nature, let's display it, especially to ourselves, but also to people to whom this sort of procedure is naturally congenial.
>
> (264e)

Division, however, is complemented by collection every step along the way (see Henry 2011, 223; Ionescu 2013). Under the umbrella of arts of division the Stranger collects things like filtering, straining, winnowing, carding, spinning, weaving (226b–c); under "production" he gathers caring for things mortal, caring for things fabricated, and imitation (219a–b), and under "acquisition" he gathers learning, recognition, commerce, combat, and hunting (219c); under "enclosures" he collects baskets, nets, slipknots, creels and so forth (220c); later he collects piracy, enslavement, tyranny along with everything else that deals with war as "hunting by force" as opposed to expertise in persuasion (222c–d); and he gathers music, painting, and shows under "goods for the soul," some of which will be for amusement, others for serious purposes (224a). Intertwining in this way collections with divisions, the Stranger reaches several definitions, first of the angler, which serves as paradigm, then of sophistry. In what follows I first summarize them all in a synoptic overview, so that in Part II.2(a) we may examine what elenchus reveals about the relations holding between them.

The Stranger identifies angling as an art of acquisition (rather than production), by conquest (rather than by voluntary exchange of gifts), through hunting (rather than fighting), of animate (not inanimate) prey, in water (not on land), hunting by striking (not by enclosures), striking by day (not by night), striking upward (not downward) (219a–221c). Following this template, the Stranger defines sophistry first (221c–223b)

as an art (*technē*) of acquisition (not production) through hunting (not exchange) of animate (not inanimate) prey, on land (not in water), hunting animals that are tame (not wild), proceeding by persuasion (not by violence), in private (not in public), practiced for recompense (not as a free gift) that concerns payment for teaching virtue (not for giving pleasure). Next (223c–224d), the sophist is said to possess an art of acquisition through exchange (not hunting), that takes the form of selling (not giving) in the form of retailing (not selling one's own productions), as wholesaling (while not settling in one city) of things pertaining to the soul (not to the body), specifically items of knowledge about virtue (not some other expertise-selling). Thirdly (224d–e), the sophist is said to practice the art of acquisition (not production), proceeding through exchange (not hunting), selling (not giving) in the form of retailing things that others make (not that he makes himself), while settled in a city (not travelling from one city to another), and doing these transactions with products pertaining to the soul (not to the body), as items of knowledge concerning virtue (not other objects of expertise). The fourth definition proceeds just like the third (224d, 231d9–10), except that it characterizes the objects of the sophist's negotiations as objects made by himself (not by others). The fifth (225a–e) definition identifies sophistry among arts of acquisition through combat (not exchange), through fighting (not competition), by means of controversy (not violence), by disputation (not one long public speech) that is done expertly (not inexpertly) and involves controversy about general issues, including justice and injustice, and thus as a form of debating that makes (rather than wastes) money. In the next stage (226b–231b) the arts of division serve as a paradigm that leads to the discovery of the "sophistry of noble descent," characterized as an art of discrimination, that deals with the cleansing or purification that discerns better from worse (not simply like from like), as far as things of the soul (not of the body) are concerned, namely as teaching (not as correction), specifically as education (not as teaching of crafts) that proceeds by cross-examination (not scolding) towards the refutation of the empty belief in one's own wisdom. Finally, according to the seventh definition (232a–268d), sophistry is an art that produces (rather than acquires) imitations through appearance-making (not likeness-making), of the human (not the divine) sort, by way of insincere (not sincere) and unknowing (not knowing) short speeches meant to bring interlocutors to self-contradiction in private (not public) conversations.

Part II: Combining the Two Methods and Exploring their Relation to the Communion of Kinds

As I hope to show in what follows, far from rejecting elenchus, the Stranger makes use of it throughout the conversation (Stage 1) and also

interweaves elenchus with division in the process of discovering the communion of kinds (Stage 2).

STAGE 1: Elenchus Used by the Stranger

The Stranger uses elenctic arguments to reveal inconsistencies among the views held by various schools of thought: dualists, monists, materialists, and formalists, respectively.[5] Without entering the dense field of scholarly interpretations of any of the following four passages, I want to simply point out that they all have the format of typical elenctic arguments.

Addressing the dualists, the Stranger inquires about the relation between Being and their two main principles (hot and cold, or other such opposites). Conceiving three possible alternatives, the Stranger then refutes them by showing how each of them leads to inconsistencies and contradictions. The three possibilities envisioned are:

(a) Being is a third, additional principle in relation to the pair of opposite ones.
(b) Being is identical with one of the two original principles.
(c) Being is somehow identical with the combination of the two principles.

If (a) Being is some other additional principle alongside the two, then we have three, not two initial principles, and the dualists were wrong about the number of first principles. If (b) Being is one of the two opposed principles, then the principle that is other than Being cannot equally be said to be. If (c) Being is identical with the combination of the two principles, then there is only one ultimate principle in the end, and the 'dualists' are shown to be contradicting themselves.[6]

Addressing the monists, the Stranger tries to clarify how they understand the relation between Being and the One. Just as in the earlier case, all options will be in turn rejected. There are two basic possibilities considered: (a) that Being and the One are one and the same thing, and (b) that the One is the same as the whole. In the first case, if Being is the same as the One, we have two names for one and the same thing. Are the two names identical with the One or different from it? If the names are different from the thing they name, there will be two beings rather than one, and hence monism collapses. If the names are identical with the One, then the One will be a name: either a name of nothing, since there is nothing other than the One, or the name of a name (of itself, 244b–d). The former is impossible, the latter leads to the absurdity of pure nominalism. In the alternative case, the relation between the One and the whole leads to contradictions: (a) if the One is the same as the whole, then, since a whole has parts, the One will be multiple, which, obviously contradicts monistic assumptions; (b) if the One is not the same as the whole, then

Being (the One) will lack something, for by not being a whole, it is deficient, and this is what the Eleatics would deny most of all; (c) if we deny that the whole exists, then neither coming into being, nor quantity, can be said to be (244e–245d). Throughout this stretch of the text we clearly recognize the Socratic/elenctic approach to these metaphysical issues.

Addressing the materialists, the Stranger helps them realize that, as long as they admit the existence of virtues such as justice or wisdom, they already presume the existence of immaterial beings, which is at odds with their presumption of *thorough* and *crude* materialism (246d):

(a) Existence of living animals implies existence of souls.
(b) The fact that souls can be just/unjust, wise/unwise implies existence of such qualities.
(c) Such qualities exist without being visible or material.
(d) Therefore, the *crude* materialism collapses.

We witness the format of an elenctic argument also in the Stranger's engagement with the Friends of the Forms, where he argues that, since the interaction between knower and known involves acting and being acted upon, the Friends need to accept a certain sense of becoming and change alongside with the changelessness of Forms (248a–e).[7] The Friends of the Forms are thus made to see that they need to accept some change at least in the souls of those moving from ignorance to knowledge upon being affected by taking in the Forms they contemplate, and thus to comprehend that both change and changelessness *are* in some way.

STAGE 2: Elenchus and Division Involved in Discovering the Communion of Kinds

So far, I have argued that, in portions of the discussion in which the Stranger is not using division, he uses elenctic reasoning. I now proceed to show that he in fact employs elenctic reasoning even as an integral part of division. In other words, elenchus is not simply compatible with the method of division; it also helps that method's progression. I proceed in three steps: first, by arguing that (a) elenchus can be interwoven with division; then, (b) that elenchus helps the Stranger establish the communion of kinds; and finally, (c) that the communion of kinds guides and empowers both elenchus and divisions.

[a] Elenchus Interwoven with Division

While the Stranger doesn't explicitly mention elenchus, he is in fact using it when dividing. Broadly understood as "test" (cf. p. 3 of this chapter), elenchus is being used implicitly by the Stranger at every stage of division, and it can also be employed retrospectively to test the accuracy of the cuts made at any stage of division as well as the consistency or inconsistency

of the cuts with the interlocutors' other beliefs. At the beginning of the conversation, the Stranger divides arts into "productive" and "acquisitive." Is the division of arts into productive and acquisitive an exhaustive division? Does angling necessarily fall into one or the other class? Are learning, recognition, commerce, combat, and hunting strictly acquisitive and not productive of anything? Why divide animal-hunting into land-hunting and aquatic-hunting? Isn't there also air-hunting, as hunting of insects or birds? These are all questions that the Stranger is naturally inclined to consider as he advances in his application of division.

Furthermore, elenchus is useful in revealing potential contradictions between results achieved in several divisions all aimed at uncovering the same nature. Looking at the seven definitions of sophistry obtained through the conversation, we notice several tensions and contradictions: first, the second definition talks about the sophist's art as one of acquisition *by exchange* whereas the first identified it as acquisition *by capture*, where exchange and capture have been introduced as mutually exclusive alternatives; secondly, the fourth definition talks about the objects of the sophist's negotiations as objects made by himself, whereas definition three talks about those objects as made by others; thirdly, definition five challenges the idea accepted in the first four definitions, that sophistry is an art that deals with exchange, and instead identifies it as an art of combat; fourthly, definition seven challenges the even earlier assumption throughout the first five definitions that sophistry is an art of acquisition, and identifies it, instead, with a productive art.

It is not that it would be intrinsically inconsistent for a sophist to be selling both his own products (arguments) as well as those made by others, or that it would be intrinsically contradictory for one and the same art to be an art of both exchange and of combat, but the Stranger's method assumes that the two classes separated on any given step of division are mutually exclusive (219a–c). Note also that the way in which subsequent definitions challenge assumptions made in earlier ones is not random, but rather follows a pattern (cf. Ionescu 2013). Thus, the fourth definition challenges the type of products to be exchanged by retailing which was endorsed in the third definition, and claims that the things exchanged are produced by oneself, not by others; the fifth definition challenges the idea that sophistry is an art of acquisition through exchange accepted in definitions one through four, and instead characterizes it as an art of acquisition through combat; while the seventh definition challenges the even earlier admission that sophistry is an art of acquisition assumed throughout the first five definitions, and claims that it is, instead, an art of production. If we are to continue the same pattern, the next natural move would be to challenge the initial admission that sophistry is an art (*technē*). This is perhaps just what Plato wants us to see! There is no other Platonic dialogue in which sophistry is called an "art" (*technē*), and in the *Sophist* itself, Plato has the Eleatic Stranger say things that clearly

disqualify sophistry from being an art, especially by contrasting it to the art of dialectic (249c–d, 251d–254b) and by describing the sophist as an ignorant imitator of the wise (268c). In fact, at 231a–232b the Stranger sums up the inquiry conducted thus far through division in terms of the very "method" of elenchus he has just described in 230b–d.[8] After recounting the first six appearances of the sophist, the Stranger remarks that the multiplicity of these appearances and their potential internal inconsistency must lead to the conclusion that "there is something wrong with the way [the sophist] appears" (232a), since he emerges as having many fields of expertise instead of one. Hence, this stretch of conversation ends with Theaetetus' admission of *aporia* regarding the sophist's real nature after several of their joint attempts to catch him (231b), for it was Theaetetus who endorsed most strongly the assumption that the sophist has an art (*technē*, 219a).

We have seen so far that elenchus notifies us *when* the divisions obtained need improvement. The necessary improvement does not come directly from elenchus, for elenchus by itself cannot indicate which of two contradictory statements is right or ought to be chosen. The improvement comes rather, I shall argue, from *understanding elenchus and division in light of the communion of kinds*. Since, as we shall see, elenchus is instrumental to discerning which kinds commune with certain others and which don't, elenchus both helps the discovery of the combinability of Forms and is assisted by that very discovery.

[b] **Elenchus and the Communion of Kinds**

Elenchus is used also in establishing the communion of kinds. First, it assists the Stranger's realization that some kinds combine, while others don't, insofar as it helps him reject both that 'no kinds combine' and that 'all kinds combine', and then it helps him establish the distinctiveness of each of the five very great kinds.

[i] Elenctic reasoning is used to reject the view that no kinds combine:

(1) Assume that no kinds combine with one another (251e).
(2) Change and Rest will have no share in Being (251e).
(3) Neither Change nor Rest would then be (252a).
(4) In that case, there can be no philosophical statement about anything whatsoever—neither monists, nor pluralists, neither those who embrace change, nor those who embrace rest can defend any of their views (252a–b).
(5) Saying that no kinds blend is self-refuting—for even stating this view presupposes a blending of some kinds, of Nonbeing with Blending (252b–d).

[ii] Elenctic reasoning is used to reject the view that all the kinds combine with one another:

(1) Assume that all kinds combine with one another (252d).
(2) Change and Rest too would then combine with each other.
(3) Change would then rest, and Rest would then change.
(4) This contradicts the very nature of Change and Rest respectively (252d).

In both arguments then we witness the Stranger employing the same basic reasoning strategy of cross-examination that he attributed to the sophistry of noble descent in the sixth attempted definition of sophistry. Even though in these two cases there is no direct interlocutor whose beliefs are tested, there is at least a virtual interlocutor upholding one or another of these extreme views which are being rejected.

[iii] While the Stranger does not explicitly use elenchus to establish the five kinds, elenchus functions implicitly as a test ensuring that the premises of each argument do not contradict other assumptions endorsed by their proponents. Take, for instance the way in which the Stranger establishes that Being and the Same are not identical with each other:

> Do we have to think of that which is and the same as one thing? – Maybe. – But if that which is and the same do not signify distinct things, then, when we say that change and rest both are, we'll be labelling both of them as being the same. – But certainly that is impossible. – So it's impossible for the same and that which is to be one. – I suppose so. – Shall we take the same as a fourth in addition to the other three Forms? – Of course.
>
> (255b11–c3)

The argument seems to have the following structure:

(1) Being and Sameness are identical with each other.
(2) Then, predicating "being" is equivalent to predicating "sameness" about something.
(3) Then, saying that "Change and Rest are" should be equivalent with "Change and Rest are the same".
(4) But "Change and Rest are" is true.
(5) "Change and Rest are the same" is false.
(6) "Change and Rest are" is not equivalent with "Change and Rest are the same".

(7) Hence, one either gives up identity of Being and Sameness, or else revises his/her view about equivalence between the two statements discussed.

[iv] Elenchus cannot discover all by itself which kinds combine, but it does nonetheless assist that discovery by pointing out contradictions in the interlocutor's belief systems and testing the consistency between the conclusions they derive and the other beliefs they uphold.

Arguing that elenchus is useful in discussing the communion of kinds will seem problematic to scholars who believe that Socratic elenchus is restricted by its very nature to surveying particular instances in search for their one defining characteristic, while collection and divisions are "wholly confined to the world of Forms" (Cornford 1935, 186). But elenchus need not be confined to discussing sensible things, just as collection and division need not be restricted to exploring interrelations among Forms, and can, instead, be applied also to sensible things and empirical observations. While the dialectician's collections and divisions aim at examining Forms and their interrelations, the dialectician's application of collection and division need not *begin* at the intelligible level. In fact, most of the time it starts at a pedestrian level, as we collect and divide things in their common everyday empirical understanding.

Elenchus can and must be used both for testing unreflective opinions about sensible things and for assessing the strength of reasoned accounts involving eternal realities. When engaged in philosophical reflection we also use elenchus to test our views about intelligible realities, which kinds commune with one another and which ones don't. The Stranger's own arguments discussing the relation between change and the other four *megista genē* use elenchus. As we have seen, this characterizes his argument testing whether Being and the Same are identical. Once the assumed identity of Being and Sameness is shown to be at odds with other views that the interlocutors maintain, they have to either reject their long-standing beliefs upheld until now, or else reject the identification of Being with Sameness (255b–c). The Stranger is thus using elenctic reasoning insofar as he is showing Theaetetus that it is their own assumptions that land them in *aporiai*. Hence, those assumptions need to be revised or else some other beliefs of theirs must be discarded.

Elenchus also helps discover which kinds combine with one another and which ones do not. The Stranger argues that Change combines with Being, the Different, and the Same, yet not with Rest.

Elenchus helps him make sense of the apparent contradiction involved in saying that Change is the same and not the same, as it prompts the Stranger to look for a solution by qualifying the sense in which Change is the Same and the sense in which it is not the same. Change is the same in

relation to itself, i.e. it partakes of the Same, but it is not the Same itself. (256a–b)

1. Some kinds combine with one another and others don't.
2. Change and Sameness are distinct kinds.
3. Change is not the same as the Same.
4. Change is the same as itself.
5. Hence, Change can combine with the Same.

Similarly, the argument establishing that Change is not the Different, yet partakes of the Different. (256c–d)

1. Some kinds combine with one another and others don't.
2. Change and the Different are distinct kinds.
3. Change is not the same as the Different.
4. Change is different from all kinds other than itself.
5. Hence, Change can combine with the Different.

Not only does the Stranger use elenchus when discussing the meaning of Being, but he also reveals that elenchus and his own dialectical approach share the same goal. For he restricts the practice of dialectic to people who have a "*pure* and just love of wisdom" (253e, my emphasis), while elenctic examination was also aiming at purification. Furthermore, the Stranger assigns the dialectician to a place of light, opposite to the darkness of ignorance and non-being that marks the abode of the sophist (254a–b), which again echoes the aims and goals of Socratic elenctic practice. A soul that is ready to submit its beliefs to elenctic testing, and thus to have its ignorance brought out into the open, is prepared to proceed tentatively, and not dogmatically, in its investigations by means of collection and division.

That collections and divisions need not be restricted to intelligible realities but can and are usefully applied to sensible things is also evident in our text. Whether we take the objects of division to be intelligible or sensible depends on the level of understanding at which we carry out divisions. To clarify what this means, let's consider the following illustration: a novice with no mathematical training would most likely define a geometrical shape, say an equilateral triangle, by collecting and dividing sensible features pertaining to the visible, drawn diagram of that triangle; whereas an expert mathematician would define that shape by collecting and dividing intelligible properties of geometrical shapes, not features of their visible diagrams. It is important to realize that both the expert mathematician and the novice might end up reaching the same definition by means of division insofar as both will probably say that the equilateral triangle is a figure that has three sides and these sides are equal (rather than unequal). The difference between the novice and the expert

is manifest not in the actual classes obtained or in the wording of the definition, but in the depth of the grasp that each of them has of the intelligible grounds that account for those classes and the reasons why those specific criteria (number of sides, equality of angles and of sides) are more natural for dividing types of triangles than other criteria would be (e.g., color, position in space, etc.). The novice grasps his reasons through features accessible through sense perception; the mathematician grasps his reasons through eternal and immutable mathematical properties.

So far, we have witnessed the Stranger using elenchus in support of division and of establishing the communion of kinds. In what follows I argue that the text shows that the support is mutual, insofar as the communion of kinds itself also grounds, supports, and improves upon the usage of both elenchus and the method of division.

[c] The Communion of Kinds Enables Division kata genē and Empowers Elenchus

The link between the communion of kinds and division is established in the following lines:

> To divide according to kinds (*to kata genē diaireisthai*) and not to consider the same form (*eidos*) to be a different one, nor a different one to be the same – don't we say that this is characteristic of the knowledge of dialectic? One who is able to do this adequately discriminates (1) one form that is extended everywhere (*pantēi*) through many (*mian idean dia pollōn*), each one standing apart, and (2) many forms that are different from each other, even though they are embraced from outside by (*hupo*) a single form, and again (*au*) (3) one form that is connected in one through many wholes, and (4) many forms that are completely separate from others. That is what it is to know how to discriminate according to kind, how each can and cannot combine.
>
> (253d1–e2; translation is my own)

This passage is one of the densest and most troubling in all of Plato's works and I cannot hope to do it justice here. Since in a previous work I rejected two traditional interpretations[9] and proposed an alternative reading of this passage (Ionescu 2013), I am going to focus here on developing the reading I advanced there by showing how the communion of kinds grounds and empowers the dialectician's use of division and of elenchus.

I read these lines to be saying that the dialectician's understanding of the communion of kinds provides guidance for correct applications of division. In other words, when our divisions are correct, that is, carried out according to the joints and articulations of reality (*to kata genē*

diaireisthai 253d1), they mirror relations existent within the network of Forms.[10] Our passage is preceded by an exchange that introduces the issue of the combination of kinds by showing that, just as the musicologist and the grammarian are experts in combining elements in their fields, so too the dialectician knows which intelligible realities combine and which do not (251d–253b). Grammarians and musicologists are experts in the combination of letters and musical notes respectively, while philosophers are experts in the combination of kinds generally, including even the most general kinds.

The first couple of lines in our passage talk about division, but there is nothing in its formulation demanding that divisions be bisective, the way the Stranger proceeds in search for the sophist in the earlier parts of the dialogue (219a–225e). Rather, the formulation suggests a superior sort of division, division according to the natural kinds (*kata genē*). The following lines talk about One-Many relations among kinds: (1) one Form is extended through many (*mian idean dia pollōn*), each of which stands apart from the others, and (2) many Forms that are different from each other but are included within a single Form that embraces them from outside, and again (3) one Form that's connected as a unit through many wholes, and (4) many Forms that are completely separate from others. Given the many (*pollōn*) referenced in step (1), it is plausible that stage (1) deals with One-Many relations between a Form (*mian idean*) and the many sensible things partaking of it, while stages (2), (3), and (4) refer to relations among Forms (*eidē*) in various respects and from different points of view: first, from the point of view of the many Forms embraced from outside by a more comprehensive Form (2); then, from the perspective of the One that is divided into the many, a single Form that is connected as a unit through many wholes (3); and finally, as many Forms that are completely separate from others (4). Accordingly, Forms connect among themselves *at more than one level*, a suggestion emphasized also by the Stranger's emphatic use of *au* (again) after the first two stages to introduce the third (253d5). A Form that at one level embraces others from outside (2), can be seen, at a different level, as one of the many Forms that stand apart while partaking of a more comprehensive form that permeates them severally (3). By thus suggesting that some Forms are more comprehensive or more abstract than others, the Stranger implies that the distinction between *the very great* kinds (*megista genē*) and *other* kinds resides in the degree of pervasiveness and the heightened rational power for organizing reality that pertains to the former over the latter. Moreover, by having Forms relate to Forms at various levels of generality the Stranger points out a variety of ways in which they relate to one another: in (2) and (4), he emphasizes *the identity and distinctiveness* of the many Forms, whereas in (3) *their complexity*, each of them being a complex whole in communion with other Forms.[11]

Remember the earlier description of elenchus:

> They collect (*sunagontes*) his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects (*autas hautais hama peri tōn autōn pros ta auta kata tauta enantias*).
>
> (230b–c)

Our ability to persuade someone that their opinions conflict with one another increases in direct proportion to how we improve our grasp of the Same and of the Different. Access to the *megista genē* of the Same and the Different enables us to correctly detect inconsistencies among our own and other people's beliefs, since such inconsistencies result from confusing one thing with another. Even being able to separate what is better from what is worse, the kind of skill that the practitioner of elenchus excels at, while purifying a soul of inconsistencies, presupposes that we recognize what is Like, and what is Unlike, what is the Same, what is Different. This is not to say that we can start to practice Socratic elenchus only after we have attained full grasp of the intelligible kinds and full mastery of dialectic, but only that the firmer our grasp of these intelligible kinds, and the better our grasp of dialectic, the more prepared and better we are at pointing out such inconsistencies and purifying our own and other people's souls of ignorance and false conceit of knowledge.

To conclude then, far from being incompatible with one another, elenchus and the dialectical method of division support and enhance each other. Furthermore, when coupled with elenchus and carried out with regard for the communion of kinds, division is, in the philosopher's hands, a powerful dialectical instrument. On the other hand, divorced from elenchus and carried out with no regard for the communion of kinds, division can easily be a sophistic tool capable of abusing and corrupting, and of departing from truth. The picture that emerges discloses the complexity and subtlety of Plato's understanding of dialectic, which is not reducible to any one logical method of thinking, but rather is an approach that takes into account and adapts itself to the nature of the object under investigation and to the overarching metaphysical horizon within which we carry out the search.

Notes

1 For excellent detailed accounts emphasizing the contrasts between Socrates and the Stranger, see McCoy 2007, 138–166; Gonzalez 2000, 161–182.
2 Unless otherwise specified, I am using Nicholas P. White's translation of the *Sophist*.
3 While I agree with 1935, Taylor 2006; and Zaks 2018, among others, in taking the sixth definition to mirror Socrates' practice, my present discussion of

the cross-examination portrayed in the sixth definition of the sophist allows for the possibility that the account we find in the sixth definition might be a simplification of what we find in the early dialogues as typical Socratic practice. For an insightful interpretation of the sixth definition in context see Larsen 2007, 1–14.

4 For a different view see Kerferd 1954, 84–90; Crivelli 2004.

5 This has remained unacknowledged until very recently. For exceptions to the usual view see Alieva 2010; Zaks 2018; and Jeng 2021/2022. Among them, Jeng's view comes closest to the view I defend. However, while Jeng admits that the Stranger employs elenchus in his refutation of monists, pluralists, Friends of the Forms and materialists and even in his exploration of the communion of kinds, he argues, unlike me, that the elenchus employed by the Stranger differs from the elenchus employed by Socrates. On his view the "divine" elenchus employed by the Stranger alone can lead to constructive results, whereas Socrates' "human" elenchus remains confined to a negative, refutational use.

6 For a more detailed account of this see Pauline Sabrier's contribution in this volume.

7 Since the argument is very complex and nuanced, I cannot do it justice in this short space. For a comprehensive inventory of positions adopted regarding this argument, as well as an elegant interpretation, which I also endorse, see Brown 1998; see also Larsen 2014.

8 For a detailed discussion see Larsen 2007.

9 The traditional interpretation, advanced by Julius Stenzel, and followed by Francis M. Cornford and R. S. Bluck, argues that our passage illustrates division of a genus into species, and thus provides a theoretical commentary to the way the Stranger has been applying division throughout the dialogue. Cornford argues that stages (1) and (2) illustrate collection, while (3) and (4) illustrate division, and that the objects collected and divided all the way through are intelligible Forms (Cornford 1935, 267–268). Bluck rightly reacts to Cornford's reading by noticing that "the many" (*ton pollon*) mentioned in stage (1) refers to sensible things, not to Forms (Bluck 1975, 126–127). Consequently, for Bluck stage (1) establishes a connection between a Form and the many sensible things falling under it, while stages (2), (3) and (4) describe relations among Forms discovered through division (Bluck 1975, 126-131). The alternative traditional interpretation proposed by Alfonso Gómez-Lobo (1977, esp. 40–47) and Noburu Notomi (1999, 234–237) is that the passage illustrates the combination of kinds, not division. Specifically, steps (1) and (2) illustrate the relation between a vowel-like Form, Being, and consonant-like Forms, of which Change and Rest are explicit examples. Being is the one Form embracing (*periechein*) Change and Rest from the outside, while Change and Rest remain "completely other" to each other. At 259a5 and b5 Being is characterized as all-pervasive and it is thus reasonable to regard it as spread out through all the other things. Steps (3) and (4) bring to the fore the relation between Non-Being, which is again all-pervasive, and non-all-pervasive forms. Taking again Change and Rest as instances of non-all-pervasive Forms, Non-Being as the single Form is connected as a unit through many wholes, here exemplified by Change and Rest. Being is responsible for what unites other Forms, while Non-Being is responsible for what keeps them apart.

10 While it is impossible to find general agreement on either side, I believe that the *megista genē* of the *Sophist* are intelligible Forms, and not mere concepts. For convincing defenses of this view see Cornford 1935; Bluck 1975; Dorter 1994.

11 In recent years Mitchell Miller proposed an alternative insightful interpretation, which reads the *Sophist* in the context of the *Theaetetus–Sophist–Statesman* trilogy. On his reading, *Sophist* 253d–e is the central nodal passage that explains how the three dialogues are connected (Miller 2016, 321–52). While the *Theaetetus* ends by listing three distinct definitions of an account, *Sophist* 253d–e, Miller argues, illuminates the meaning of the second and third "accounts of an account" by illustrating in steps (1) and (2) the application of non-bisective collection and division encountered in the second half of the *Statesman*, and illustrating in steps (3) and (4) the application of bisective division that is exhibited throughout the *Sophist*. In the absence of space here to do justice to an exposition and discussion of Miller's view, it suffices nevertheless to point out that on his interpretation of *Sophist* 253d–e, just as much as on the one I proposed above, elenchus can be seen at work in enabling divisions.

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6 Using Examples in Philosophical Inquiry

Plato's *Statesman* 277d1–278e2 and 285c4–286b2

Jens Kristian Larsen

> The rest of mankind, however, fail to be aware of what they do after they wake up just as they forget what they do while asleep.
>
> Heraclitus, B1 (trans. Robinson)

The dialectical inquiries found in Plato's dialogues abound with examples meant to highlight particular features of a target of inquiry. The main interlocutor of most dialogues, Socrates, is particularly fond of illustrating a subject matter of inquiry per analogy or image. In the *Gorgias* he argues that rhetoric is to the soul what cookery is to the body (465d7–e1); in the *Theaetetus* he suggests that the faculty of memory may perhaps be likened to a block of wax (191c8–d2) or an aviary (197d5–10); and in the *Republic* he likens the sun and its relation to what is visible to the idea of the good and its relation to what is intelligible (508b12–c2). In the *Republic* he even admits to "strain after" presenting things through imagery (*glischrōs eikazō*; *R.* 488a1–2).[1]

But while argument through analogy or example seems to be a central feature of Socratic inquiry, Socrates never explicitly discusses the procedure of using examples in dialectical inquiries. Only in the *Statesman*, it appears, do we find such a discussion. Here the question what examples (*paradeigmata*)[2] are is explicitly raised (at 278c3–6) by the main interlocutor of the dialogue, the Eleatic visitor. He brings the use of examples in inquiries into close proximity with dialectic when he suggests that the use of examples may make us more dialectical about everything (285c8–d7) and that it is difficult to point to any of the greater matters adequately without using examples (277d12). One might therefore expect scholars to accord these passages from the *Statesman* a central position in an account of Platonic dialectic. But the fact is that scholars who work on Platonic dialectic in general tend to accord them little, if any, significance in Plato's account of dialectic, while those who hold that they state something important about dialectic generally see them as concerned solely with the way dialectical inquiry is understood in the *Statesman* or, perhaps, in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* together.[3]

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In this chapter I argue that the use of examples in dialectical inquiries, discussed in the *Statesman* more specifically as the use of *paradeigmata* for the purpose of leading others to what they have not yet recognized, is important to Plato's overall conception of dialectic, and that the *Statesman* explains why. For the dialogue, I argue, makes two crucial points concerning this use of examples. First, examples when used in inquiries are not pedagogical tools on a par with any others; they are tools eminently suited to train two abilities central to dialectic, namely the ability to distinguish between things that look alike and the ability to see what things that seem different have in common. Second, examples may facilitate our understanding of "greater matters" such as statesmanship and philosophy, that is, the typical subjects of dialectical inquiry, because examples, when duly recognized *as* examples, help us realize what such matters have in common with what is less significant while at the same time highlighting the radical difference between them. I finally argue that the *Statesman* indicates that the abilities to distinguish things that look alike and to see likenesses between things that differ are characteristic of human beings in general and, accordingly, that philosophers are set apart from other human beings by their mastery of these abilities, not merely by having them.

Within the discussion of examples in the *Statesman* commencing at 277d1 and ending at 287b2, two passages are particularly important for deciding what relation exists between the use of examples and the science of dialectic: 277d1–278e2 and 285c4–286b2.[4] In the first part of the chapter I analyze the first passage in detail; I turn to the second passage in the second part.

Exemplifying Examples—*Statesman* 277d1–278e2

The discussion of examples comes about as a result of the fact that the inquiry into the expertise of the statesman has not yet yielded the desired result: a satisfactory circumscription of his expertise that sets it clearly apart from other types of expertise with which it might be confused. The interlocutors have managed to present an external outline (*tēn exōthen perigraphēn*) that may be adequate, the visitor admits, but the details of the picture that will help bring clarity to this expertise are still missing (277b6–c3; see also 268c5–11 with 275a3–6 where a related problem is brought up).[5] What he indicates, presumably, is that the account of statesmanship they have presented up to this point in the inquiry is correct because it has identified essential features of it, but also that it is not sufficient because these features do not set statesmanship apart in a sufficiently clear manner from other types of expertise with which it may be confused. It is in order to address this problem that an example is called for. But what is an example? And why would it be helpful in the inquiry?

The visitor offers the following explanation in answer to the latter question: it is "difficult (*chalepon*) to point out (*endeiknusthai*) adequately any of the greater matters without using examples (*paradeigmasi*)" (277d1–2); he adds that it "seems as though each of us, knowing everything as in a dream, is then ignorant again of everything when, as it were, awake" (277d2–4).[6] When young Socrates asks the visitor what he means, the visitor states that he seems to have stirred up what we experience concerning knowledge (*epistēmē*) and that an example of what he means by example is called for (277d5–10). The implication is, apparently, that the visitor's enigmatic words have made Socrates confused, an experience that characterizes human beings in general when it comes to knowledge.[7] The example he will present in order to help Socrates understand what examples are will at the same time exemplify what it means to teach others through examples.

The verb *endeiknusthai*, to point out or indicate, is here closely linked with the word *paradeigma*, example, not simply by the fact that the visitor mentions both together but also by the fact that both words have the same root, *deik-*, "to show" or "point out." What the visitor has in mind when talking about using examples seems to be an act where one points to one thing by placing another thing next to (*para-*) it in such a way that the second thing exhibits something characteristic of the first thing. But what are we to make of the claim that each of us potentially knows everything as if in a dream, but that we are at the same time ignorant?

The opposition between being asleep and awake, when paired with the opposition between knowledge and ignorance, resonates with a number of passages in the Platonic corpus, such as *Theaetetus* 201c6–202c6,[8] *Phaedrus* 277d10–e3, *Meno* 85c9–d1, and *Republic* 476c1–d3 and 520c6–d2,[9] passages that in various ways discuss what distinguishes knowledge from opinion. For present purposes, the most important of them is *Republic* 476c1–d3, where Socrates suggests that those who recognize that there are beautiful things, but not that there is something beautiful in itself, live life as if in a dream. For dreaming, whether one is asleep or awake, consists in "believing a likeness of something to be not a likeness, but rather the thing itself."[10] The one who holds that there are both beautiful things and something beautiful in itself, by contrast, and who does not confuse the one with the other, is awake. The difference between living life as if in a dream and living fully awake thus hinges on the ability to distinguish between *eidē*[11] and between *eidē* and what participates in them, an ability that in later books of the *Republic* is described as crucial to a philosopher-ruler, that is, the dialectician (520c1–d2). The ensuing discussion of examples in the *Statesman* is also concerned with the ability to distinguish correctly between things, and the parallel use of metaphor in the *Republic* passage could seem to suggest that what the visitor is about to say about examples is meant to spell out something important to dialectical inquiry as such.

This suggestion is corroborated by the visitor's claim that he has somehow stirred up what we experience about knowledge (*to peri tēs epistēmēs pathos en hēmin*)—where "we" seems to refer to human beings in general. This claim indicates that the discussion about to commence is intended to highlight something crucial about the way examples may affect all of us as regards knowledge. We may even suspect that the *pathos* the visitor will describe in certain ways resembles the *pathos* the cave-image of the *Republic* is meant to illustrate;[12] the lines uttered here by the visitor seem to have the same level of generality and to revolve around the same basic terms, human nature and the experience it undergoes, as the lines uttered by Socrates concerning the *pathos* of human beings in the beginning of that image (compare *R.* 514a1–2 with *Plt.* 277d6–7 and 278c8–d1).

In order to exemplify what he means by stating that an example is now called for, the visitor directs young Socrates' attention to the situation where children are just learning their letters. How we are to understand this situation is a matter of some controversy, also because we do not have "any reliable sources on grammatical education from Plato's times" (Jirsa 2013, 141).[13] The visitor describes the situation as one where children discern letters correctly in certain short and easy syllables, but are in doubt and make mistakes when these same letters are found in "other ones" (277e2–278a3). It is not entirely clear if the visitor by "other ones" means other syllables or other words,[14] but not much hangs on this. Important is the fact that the syllable in which the children judge the letters correctly are characterized as "shortest" and "easiest," which demonstrates that the syllables or words they have trouble with are longer and more difficult; and this, in fact, would seem to suggest that what the visitor has in mind are other words, not syllables, since it makes little sense to say that some syllables are longer and more difficult than others. What the children have to realize is that the letters contained in the short syllable can be found in the longer word as well.

We may note that letters function as an analogy for various elements of reality in a number of Platonic dialogues (*Ti.* 57c; *Tht.* 201d8–202c6; *Phlb.* 17a8–b1, 18b6–d2; see also *R.* 368c8–e6 where the difference between reading small and big letters is used as an analogy illustrating the difference between justice in city and soul), an analogy the visitor too will bring up (at 278d1). In the central part of the *Sophist*, moreover, the visitor likens forms to letters (*grammata*; 253a1) and the science of dialectic to the art of spelling (*grammatikē*; 253a12).[15] These parallels suggest that the visitor's choice of an example of what he means by example is not coincidental; his discussion of children learning to become better at spelling is intended to exemplify how one becomes more dialectical.

When it comes to short syllables, the visitor explains, the children are able to say true things about the letters in them (277e7–8). But in the case where the same letters are found in other words they make mistakes (*pseudesthai*) both in speech (*logō[i]*) and judgement (*doxē[i]*; 278a3).

Let us suppose that what the visitor has in mind is a situation where a child is unable to spell a more difficult word containing the letters of a known, short syllable; the child is, e.g., able to spell the word "can" but does not know that "candid" contains the same combination of letters as a part. What the visitor wishes young Socrates to grasp concerning this situation is how one may, in "the easiest and most beautiful way," lead (*epagein*) such children toward what they have not yet recognized.

To do so, one has

> to lead them back (*anagein*) first to those cases in which they were correctly judging these same letters, and, having lead them back (*anagagontas*), to set alongside (*para*) them the ones not yet recognized, and by comparing them to point out (*endeiknunai*) that there's the same similarity (*homoiotēta*) and nature (*phusin*) in both intertwinings (*sumplokais*), until the letters that are truly judged have been shown as juxtaposed with all the ones about which there's ignorance.
>
> (278a8–b4)

In this way known syllables may come to serve as examples that

> bring it about that each one of all the letters in all the syllables is addressed as other (*heteron*) when it is other than all the others, and as the same (*tauton*) when it is the same as itself always in accordance with the same things.
>
> (278b4–c1)

Concerning this description, we may start by noting the recurrence of the verbal element *agein*, "to lead," in the two compound verbs *epagein* and *anagein*. The point of using examples is to lead, *epagein*, the students to what they have not yet recognized by leading them back, *anagein*, to what they already know. Some scholars (see Prantl 1855, 79–80; Robinson 1953, 213; Tsouyopoulos 1974, 94; see also Ricken 2008, 142–7 where the whole situation is described in Aristotelian terms) have seen a foreshadowing of Aristotelian induction (*epagōgē*) in the passage,[16] the process of "moving from particulars to universals" (*Top*. 1.12, 105a13–14) that Aristotle associates with Socrates (*Metaph*. 1078b27–29); the process the visitor is describing may also be said to have a certain resemblance to the procedure of advancing from what is better known to us to what is better known by nature commonly employed in Aristotle as a method for arriving at *archai* (see e.g. *EN* 1095b2–4; *Ph*. 184a16–23; *APo* 71b33–72a5).[17]

But it should be emphasized that the visitor is not describing a procedure in which one infers something universal from a number of particular

cases—what Aristotelian induction aims at—but one where one moves from one particular thing to another, using the first (that one knows) to exhibit something about the other that both things share for the purpose of coming to understand this other thing better. This procedure, several scholars have argued, corresponds to what Aristotle describes as employing a *paradeigma*, the rhetorical counterpart, according to him, of induction (*APr*. II, 24, 69a14; see Goldschmidt 1947, 93–7; Lane 1999, 94–5; Ricken 2008, 142–3; Ausland 2012, 226–8); the visitor's procedure may also be compared with what Aristotle calls an argument "through similarity" (see *Top*. 156b10–17). More important, as Robinson emphasizes (1953, 212), to my mind correctly, the process the visitor describes strongly resembles the procedure of analogical reasoning in which Socrates often engages in Plato (and in Xenophon), for instance when he seeks to discover what the nature of justice is in a man by considering justice in the *polis* (*R*. 368c5–369a4) or what the nature of rhetoric and sophistry are by considering various types of flattery (*Grg*., 464b2–466a7; for further discussion, see Robinson 1953, 212–4; Lane 1999, 19–20, 90–3; and, especially, Ausland 2012, 232–42).

The next thing to note is that the process described by the visitor contains three clearly distinguished steps.[18] First, the attention of the children is drawn back to what they know, the letter-combination of the easy syllable. Second, after having done this, the teacher "places" (or writes) a more difficult word next to it. Finally, by comparing the two the teacher points out (*endeiknusthai*) that the same similarity (*homoiotēs*) and nature (*phusis*) resides in both, that is, he points out the letter-combination found in both.[19] Thereby the easy syllable becomes an example enabling the children to judge correctly the letters in the syllable and the word, stating that those that are the same are the same and those that are other are other.

To follow our previous suggestion, we may imagine that the teacher wishes to teach the children how to write "candid." To do so, he first draws their attention to "can," then writes "candid" next to it, and finally compares the two. The easy syllable "can" thereby becomes an example illustrating that "can" and "candid" share a nature and similarity, the letter-combination "c-a-n," that enables the pupils to judge correctly that the letters that are the same in both syllables are the same.

Importantly, however, the visitor also indicates that the example points out to the children how the two words compared differ from each other and helps them recognize the elements contained in the unknown word that are not contained in the simple syllable; for he claims that the example brings it about that *each* letter in *all* the syllables—that is, presumably, the syllable used as example as well as the syllables of the longer word—are addressed correctly, those that are different from the others as other, and those that are the same as the same (278b5–c1).

It seems somewhat unclear from the text how an example is meant to bring it about that the letters contained in a longer word that are not

contained in the example come to be judged correctly; but perhaps the visitor merely means to suggest that using an example is an important step in learning to write a new word because it helps one to recognize that some of the letters are already known and that one has to concentrate on those that one does not know yet. If this suggestion is along the right lines, what the visitor is indicating is that a simple syllable, when used as an example, is helpful when learning to write a more difficult word because it highlights, first, that you already know some of the elements, as well as their combination, in the longer word, and second, that there are other elements that you do not yet know and do not know how to combine in order to arrive at the word you wish to spell correctly.

At the same time the example of children learning their letters is, it may be argued, intended to reflect the inquiry into sophist, statesman, and philosopher that the interlocutors are currently engaged in. In this inquiry the visitor explicitly employs examples in order to help Theaetetus and young Socrates come to a better understanding of sophistry and statesmanship (see e.g. *Sph*. 218d8–9, 233d3–4; *Plt*. 279a7–b1). For that reason, it is worth noting that the terms "similarity" and "nature," signifying the letter-combination contained in the two words or syllables in the passage we are considering, resonates with the motifs of likeness and nature running through the trilogy *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* as a whole. It is worth considering these motifs in some detail in order to appreciate the full significance of the discussion of examples in the *Statesman*.

The abstract noun "similarity" occurs at the very beginning of the *Theaetetus* when Theodorus claims that Socrates and Theaetetus resemble each other (145e1), a claim that is brought up again in the *Statesman* when Socrates suggests he is akin to young Socrates because of their name and to Theaetetus because of the nature (*phusin*) of their faces (257d1–258a3). This kinship mirrors the greater problem that sophist, statesman, and philosopher seem akin in a way that renders them difficult to distinguish. At the beginning of the *Sophist* Socrates asks whether people in Elea distinguish philosopher, sophist, and statesman as three kinds (217a7–9); for according to Socrates their respective types of expertise, real or merely apparent, look alike and are commonly confused (see 216c2–217a2).

Further, in the *Sophist*, while discussing whether or not the use of *elenchos* should be regarded as sophistry, the visitor explains that, in order to be safe, one needs to be on one's guard the most when it comes to similarities (*tas homoiotētas*), since it is a most slippery kind (231a6–8).[20] In the *Statesman* he suggests that most people are not accustomed to considering things by dividing in accordance with kinds (*kat' eidē … skopein diairoumenous*) and for that reason they throw things that are different together, deeming them similar, and do the opposite when it comes to other things (285a4–8). But this may be avoided, he suggests, if one, i)

whenever one sees a community (*koinōnian*) of many things, does not desist until one sees all the differences that reside in forms (*tas diaphoras hoposaiper en eidesi keintai*) in this community and ii) whenever one sees all sorts of dissimilarity in a plurality of things, is unable to be discountenanced and stop before one "encompasses and encloses" in one kind "all the things that belong within the confines of one similarity (*ta oikeia entos mias homoiotētos*)" (285a8–b6). In other words, in order to avoid confusing things that look alike with each other and regarding things that seem different but share a similarity as radically different, one should pursue both differences within communities of things (that is, we may assume, things that are alike) and similarities that things that seem different share. In doing so, it seems, one would be employing the procedures of collection and division described by the visitor in the *Sophist* as central to dialectic (see 253d1–e2).[21]

We may suggest that the children learning to write are trained in employing these same two procedures through the use of examples, albeit at a very pedestrian level—for what the examples enable them to identify correctly are the elements that the easy syllable and the more difficult word have in common and those that are unique to one of them. The use of examples, we may suggest, not only helps the children learn how to spell a new, and longer, word, it also trains two abilities that will be important for writing words correctly in general, the ability to identify likenesses and the ability to identify differences in words and syllables.

At the same time, the example of children learning to write is intended to illustrate the way human beings in general learn to parse the world. Examples, the visitor explains at 278c3–6, come about whenever "something" brings to completion one true judgement concerning two things as a pair (*peri hekateron hōs synamphō*),[22] something that i) is the same in something different, ii) is judged correctly, and iii) is "drawn together" (*synachthen*).[23] In the case of the children learning to write, this "something" is the letters that the simple syllable and the longer word have in common. At 278c8–d1, however, the visitor suggests that our soul by nature is affected in the same way with respect to the elements of all things as the children are with respect to the letters. We are therefore entitled to infer that examples come about in general whenever one thing containing certain elements is used as a basis for judging the elements contained in another thing. The "elements" of the city relevant for understanding justice in the city, for instance, that Socrates points to in order to help his interlocutors understand justice in the soul may, when seen from this perspective, be regarded as an example.[24]

But if this is how examples come about, the visitor finally suggests, we should not wonder "if our soul" is at times "made stable by the truth" in one situation concerning each thing, but at others is adrift concerning everything in another situation (278d1–3). At times we judge the

elements of some things correctly but then, when these same elements are "transposed back into the long and not so easy syllables" of the things (*pragmata*), we are engaged with we become ignorant (278d3–6). Human beings are in general, then, just as children learning to write: we are able to "spell out" the elements contained in certain simple matters but then, when we encounter the same elements in more complex matters, we get confused; and if examples may help us overcome this confusion, as the context clearly indicates they may, it is fair to say that the visitor's discussion of examples addresses a concern central to Plato—how we may become more knowledgeable about the more difficult things we are engaged or concerned with.

A critical reader might balk, however, at the suggestion that the passage we have been considering so far is concerned with knowledge at all. For it could be objected that the sole concern of the visitor is how we may move from a true or correct opinion about something to a true opinion about something else and that such opinions are inferior to knowledge (Jirsa 2013, 144–9). To this objection we may reply, first, that the passage is not concerned with the contrast between having a true opinion and having knowledge of an object that we know from, for instance, *Republic* V. It is concerned with the activity of *judging* correctly the elements contained in two different things. Second, since the visitor explicitly states that the use of examples has a bearing on what we experience concerning knowledge, and since the example of schoolchildren learning to write is meant to illustrate how they may acquire the knowledge needed for writing a more difficult word, we may assume that the visitor means to suggest that the ability to make correct judgements about the elements of a thing is a necessary, if not necessarily a sufficient, condition of attaining knowledge of that thing, of what it is. Finally, the visitor suggests, at 278d8-e2, that, if we only had false beliefs, that is, if we did not make correct judgements about the elements of at least certain simple things, we would never be able to arrive at a small part of the truth and acquire wisdom (*phronēsis*). Wisdom, the aim of the philosopher, he thereby suggests, is only possible to acquire—to the extent that it is possible to acquire—, because human beings generally have some grasp of the elements of things, however shaky that grasp may be. Whether or not what the visitor argues stands in opposition to the account of opinion and knowledge in *Republic* V, the implication of his argument is that one may help human beings acquire some measure of wisdom and truth by expanding their correct judgements about simple matters to more complex matters through the use of examples.[25]

Becoming more dialectical through the use of examples—Statesman *285c4–286b2*

After having explained what he means by an example, the visitor proposes a specific example meant to help the inquiry into statesmanship, that is,

the weaver (278e4–283b5). At 285c4, however, the visitor returns to his previous, general discussion of the use of examples in inquiry. The interlocutors should admit, he now suggests, "something else" (or "another argument"; *ton heteron*) about the "things sought for (*tōn zetoumenōn*)" as well as "the whole engagement (*tēs pasēs diatribēs*) in speeches of this kind (*toisde logois*)" (285c5–6).

The claim that something else must now be admitted that concerns "the whole engagement" in speeches of this kind indicates that this "something" pertains to the inquiry found in the *Sophist* as well, in so far as the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* constitute one prolonged inquiry; and since this inquiry seeks to settle a complex *ti esti* question by delivering an account (*logos*) of the subject matters inquired into, of what they are (*Sph*. 217a7–9, 218b6–c5), it seems likely that it also pertains to the types of inquiries Socrates typically engages in. The point of departure of this new matter introduced is, again, children learning their letters.

When children learn to spell a specific word, the visitor suggests, the inquiry (*tēn zētēsin*) is not undertaken more (*mallon*) for the sake of learning that particular word than (ē) for the sake of becoming "more literate about all proposed words" (285c8–d3); the same situation obtains, he further suggests, in their present inquiry into statesmanship. Now, the "elements" contained in the example he has just brought up for the purpose of analyzing statesmanship—weaving—correspond to the letters in the simple syllable; and just like no one would want to present an account of a simple syllable for its own sake, "no one in his right mind would hunt down the account of weaving for its own sake" (285d9–10). One would only give an account of either for the sake of the more complex matters they are meant to point to. But even when it comes to statesmanship, the visitor adds—that is, the target of their inquiry—the inquiry (*zētēsis*) was not proposed more for its sake than for the sake of becoming more dialectical (*dialektikōterois gignesthai*) about everything (285d5–7). From this we may draw two conclusions.

First, the inquiry into statesmanship has a twofold goal, to clarify statesmanship *and* to become more dialectical about everything. It is important to notice (see Ricken 2008, 163) that the visitor is *not* suggesting that the main purpose of the inquiry is to become more dialectical about everything and that statesmanship is merely an object of exercise, as several scholars have argued (Owen 1973, 353; Miller 1980, 69–71; Sayre 2006, 14, 34). What he suggests is that the aim of becoming more dialectical is at least on a par with that of circumscribing statesmanship in the inquiry. Moreover, as Ricken observes, the goal of becoming better at writing, the stand-in for becoming better dialecticians, "can only be reached … when the children succeed" in writing the unknown word (163, my translation). Likewise, we may suppose, one can only become a better dialectician by practicing dialectic on concrete objects of inquiry.

If we are allowed to extend the analogy between children learning to write difficult words and inquiry into greater matters further, we may also suggest that the visitor means to indicate that each of the greater matters calls for a unique inquiry. When it comes to difficult words, one has to learn how to spell them one by one, through different examples; in learning how to spell "neighbor," for instance, one does not automatically learn how to spell "knight" or "parliament" correctly. In the same way, we may suggest, a dialectical inquiry into something will have to take into account the particular features of that which is inquired into; having learned how to "spell" sophist, for instance, does not teach one how to "spell" philosopher. [26] If this suggestion is along the right lines, it means that, even if dialectical inquiries have certain procedures in common, these procedures are not a method in the strong sense that they will, when correctly employed, on their own lead you to knowledge of any subject you may wish to inquire into.

Second, dialectic is, according to the visitor, not something one either does or does not possess the ability to engage in. It is rather something in which one may become more or less proficient, as is suggested by *dialektikōterois* at 285d7, that is, it is something like an ability or competence resembling a basic capacity for reading. In contrast to a prevailing understanding of dialectic in the literature on Plato, according to which dialectic is a type of knowledge exclusive to the accomplished philosopher,[27] the visitor appears to argue that "being dialectical" is something that comes in degrees. Earlier he suggested that human beings, when it comes to the elements of all things, experience what young children experience concerning the letters in words. And since the ability to read that is exercised and improved through the use of examples is the *analogon* of dialectic, we seem intitled to infer that the visitor is indicating that human beings, in so far as they are able to identify the elements contained in at least certain things, are dialectical in the sense that they have some capacity for dialectic that, through proper training, may develop into the full expertise of the *dialektikos*. This, we may suggest, is the deeper meaning of the visitor's enigmatic suggestion that each of us knows everything as if in a dream.

The point the visitor wishes to make in this particular section of the inquiry concerns the way inquiry should proceed specifically when it comes to important matters, a subject he clearly announced already at 277d2 as the reason why he found it important to discuss examples. Regarding the question what the visitor understands by the greater (*meizona*; 277d2) or greatest (*megista*; see 285e4) matters, it seems obvious from his later discussion that statesmanship is included among them (see *Plt*. 292d4-5), as many scholars also argue (e.g. Owen 1973, 358; Miller 1980, 70; Ricken 2008, 164). It is also fair to assume that matters such as being, otherness, and identity are included, since the visitor suggested that they belong to the *megista genē* at *Sophist* 254b8–c4, as well as the matters

all human beings need to consider carefully if they are to live flourishing lives, since he described them as *ta megista* at *Sophist* 230e1–4 (compare with *Ap*. 22d7–8). Even Socrates' refutative practice seems included in so far as the visitor described it as *megistē* and *kuriōtatē* among the cleansing arts at *Sophist* 230d8–9. In short, we may suppose that the list will include most, or perhaps all, subjects the visitor finds worthy of profound philosophical inquiry.

The visitor's present argument, we may infer, concerns the way inquiry into such matters should be conducted in general. It is spelled out in further detail by means of a complex distinction that needs careful consideration. It has escaped most men, the visitor begins, that certain perceptible similarities (*aisthētai tines homoiotētes*) that are easily understood have emerged by nature (*pephukasin*) for some of the things that are. These are not difficult to exhibit (*dēloun*), since they are easy to point out (*endeixasthai*) to someone asking for an account (*logos*) of them whenever one might wish to do so, since they make no trouble and require no argument (285d10–e4).[28] For the greatest and most honorable of the things that are, by contrast, no image (*eidōlon*) has been worked out in bodily shape for human beings that would allow one who wished to fill up a questioning soul to fill it up adequately (*hikanōs*) by showing it and adapting it to one of the senses of the questioner (285e4–286a4). It is for this reason that one "must practice being able to receive and give an account (*logon*) of each thing. For bodiless things (*ta asōmata*), being most beautiful and greatest, are pointed out clearly only in an account (*logō[i] monon … saphōs deiknutai*) and in nothing else" (286a4–7).

Here the visitor picks up the theme of similarities that he earlier identified as central to examples. His point is not, then, that some of the things that are, are perceptible while others are not, a point made in both the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, but rather that some of the *similarities* existing between things are perceptible (I here take for granted that the similarity is not a concrete thing, similar to another, but a certain something that two things have in common, as is suggested by the visitor's description at 278a8–b4). The fact that he emphasizes the difficulty in pointing out (*deiknusthai*) the greater matters, an activity central to the previous discussion of examples, further suggests that the distinction made in this passage is meant to have a direct bearing on this previous discussion; and, as we have seen, that discussion set out from the claim that it is difficult to point out any of the greater matters adequately without examples (277d1–2).

What the visitor has in mind when talking about perceptible similarities is, we may assume, cases where what two things have in common is easy for all to see or hear, such as letters, phonemes, or the snubness of the nose of Socrates and Theaetetus. Should someone ask for an account of such a likeness, one might give it simply by pointing to its perceptible manifestation. For those things the visitor calls "greatest and most

honorable" (*ta megista kai timiōtata*), however, the situation is different; here "no image devised as plain as day for human beings" (*eidolon ouden pros tous eirgasmenon enargōs*; trans. S. Benardete) can be found that one may use to satisfy someone inquiring into them (285e4–286a4).

How are we to understand this caveat? If it is correct to assume that the point the visitor is making is meant to have a bearing on the way examples may help one in pointing to the greatest matters, the point cannot be that the greatest matters cannot be depicted, as Owen famously argued (1973). For to make that point, it seems superfluous to bring in the notion of perceptible similarities, at least if one presupposes that similarities in general are not perceptible things, strictly speaking, but rather something that two things have in common that may or may not be perceptible. I would like to suggest that the visitor is arguing that whatever *likeness* the greater matters may have with other things cannot be perceived and that this explains why bodily images cannot be used to point to them. Put differently, his overall point is that, while examples in general may help us extend our understanding from what we already know to what we do not by highlighting the similarity connecting both, if that similarity is not perceptible, we will need to go about the examples in a peculiar manner.

Should we infer that the visitor is arguing that one, in order to point to the greatest matters, should abandon images (*eidola*) altogether and that the examples one needs to point the greatest matters out adequately (see 277d1–2) cannot be understood as images? No, for the visitor is not claiming that one cannot use images when inquiring into such matters. He is making the more subtle claim that there are no bodily images that, if fitted to one of the senses, would fill up the soul of an inquirer adequately.[29] This still leaves open the possibility that one might fill up the soul of an inquirer in an inadequate manner. More importantly, it also leaves open the possibility that one might fill up the soul of an inquirer adequately when using an image if one refrains from "fitting" that image to the senses. For instance, in drawing a line to illustrate the relation between what is perceptible and what is intelligible, one might insist that it is the proportion the line illustrates that is important, not the perceptible line itself. In doing so, one would highlight at one and the same time the radical difference and the important likeness between the image and what the image is meant to illustrate.

It seems to me that such a use of images characterizes the inquiries we see Socrates engaged in in Plato as well as the inquiries conducted by the Eleatic visitor. Both dialecticians employ certain activities and things as examples or images, such as angling, weaving, mythical beasts, and lumps of wax, in order to illustrate something important about something else that is difficult to understand, such as sophistry, statesmanship, the desires of the soul, or its nature. These "things," whether we are to think of them as bodily or not, function as images because they are used in the inquiry to help highlight a similarity that they share with something

else, a greater matter, a similarity that cannot in itself be perceived. In the various attempts at giving accounts of the things that serve as images, we may suppose, the real aim is to bring this non-perceptible similarity with something else to clarity. Thereby the accounts of the rather trivial matters may help us arrive at a better account of what we do not yet understand because we cannot account for it.

This, I believe, is the point the visitor is making when he claims that we need to "practice being able to receive and give an account of each thing." When he claims that "bodiless things, being most beautiful and greatest, are pointed out clearly only in an account and in nothing else" (286a4–7), he is not suggesting that images and examples cannot help us arrive at such an account. On the contrary, he is arguing that, if used intelligently, they are imminently suited to help us at arriving at such accounts—even if they are only one way among others to do so.

The inquiry of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, we may finally note, suggests that this use of examples as part of an inquiry is a flexible procedure. In both dialogues, the visitor changes his leading examples in the course of the inquiry. In the *Sophist* he sets out from the example of the angler (218d8–9), but then changes the example, first to certain household activities (226c1–2), then to a painter or imitation artist (233d3–234b10). In the *Statesman*, in turn, he sets out from the example of the herdsman (see 275b3–7 where the herdsman is identified as a *paradeigma*), but then later introduces the example of the weaver (278e4–279b6). It has been a matter of controversy how we are to understand these changes, and a full discussion of this matter is beyond the scope of the present chapter. I would like to suggest, however, that the change from one example to another does not mean that the initial examples are misguided or wrong; rather, each chosen example helps bring out one aspect of sophistry or statesmanship, respectively, and stands in need of being complemented by additional examples, but is not in and of itself be wrong. As Roslyn Weiss (1995) has argued, the example of weaving presented in the *Statesman* would not, unless supplemented by the example of the herdsman, lead to an adequate understanding of statesmanship. The example of herding highlights the fact that the statesman is a caretaker of living beings, which the example of weaving does not. If this suggestion is along the right lines, this also means that using examples in an inquiry requires tact and a preliminary understanding of the subject matter inquired into.

That, however, should hardly come as a surprise to anyone who has tried to teach difficult matters to students; it is often the case that one needs several, supplementary examples to bring out features of a complex matter that students find difficult to grasp. To me it seems that such a use of examples is a salient feature both of the way that Socrates and other main interlocutors perform dialectical inquiries in Plato's dialogues and of the way Plato seeks to lead his readers to insights into the greatest matters. [30]

Notes

1 Paul Shorey (1935) remarks (note ad loc.) that "γλίσχρως is untranslatable"; I here follow his suggested translation.
2 It should be noted that Socrates himself hardly ever uses the word *paradeigma* to characterize an image or analogy he employs; nevertheless Richard Robinson (1953, 212) is surely right in claiming that the passage in the *Statesman* contains "something like a discussion of analogy" and that e.g. the "city of the *Republic* is," in the language of the *Statesman*, "an example, a case of justice used to throw light on another case of justice." For further discussion of Socrates' use of examples, see Peter Larsen's contribution to this anthology.
3 Stenzel 1917 touches on *Statesman* 285c4–286b2 but does not contain a discussion of examples; Robinson 1953 contains a brief discussion of the passage 278a (212–14) but does not accord it a central position in Plato's supposedly differing conceptions of dialectic; in Fink 2012 only Ausland 2012, 226 discusses examples as described in the *Statesman*. Dixsaut 2001, 246–77, however, contains a prolonged discussion while El Murr 2015 addresses the question how the use of *paradeigmata* as discussed in the *Statesman* fits in "with the broader context of Platonic epistemology" (1). Several critics treating specifically of the *Statesman* have pointed to the importance of the passage for Plato's so-called later dialogues and the procedures of collection and division, see e.g. Owen 1973; Miller 1980; Kato 1995; Lane 1999; Sayre 2006. Only Lane (19–20) considers the possibility that using examples may be a feature of Platonic dialectic more generally. Jakub Jirsa (2013) argues that it is misguided to see examples as central to Platonic dialectic, understood as a method for inquiry, since their purpose is, he argues, at best didactic.
4 Victor Goldschmidt (1947) includes the lines 278e2–279b in the first passage; I do not, since they treat of the specific inquiry into the expertise of the statesman, not examples in general.
5 G. E. L. Owen (1973, 351–3) makes a great deal of the fact that the visitor in the passage preceding the discussion starting at 277d1 describes their previous attempts at defining the expertise of the statesman as a painting and at 277c3–5 distinguishes the act of revealing something through a *logos* clearly from attempts to reveal something through a *graphē*. This, Owen argues, demonstrates that Plato, in the passage 285d9–286b1, "means to be understood literally" (353) when he writes that there is no *eidolon* for the greatest and most honorable things (285e4–286a1), and that a metaphysical reading of the whole 285d9–286a7 passage is, therefore, not supported by the text. But this misses the real point of the visitor's suggestion at 277a6, that their previous discussion has arrived at a mere *schema*, and, at 277b8–c1, that their *logos* is like a sketch (*perigraphē*) of an animal; the contrast the visitor highlights in 277a3–c6 is not between pictures, in the sense of *eidola*, and arguments, *logoi*, but between imprecise (or mythical) and precise *logoi* (one may compare this with Aristotle, *EN* I.7, 1098a22–6). This has, as far as I can see, little to do with the contrast between matters for which there are bodily *eidola* and matters for which there are not discussed in 285d9–286a7. For further discussion of Owen's reading, see Dixsaut 2001, 269–77.
6 The Greek text used is the Oxford Classical Texts, edited by Duke et. al.; unless otherwise noted, the translation is by Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (2012). The translation has been slightly modified in some places without notice.
7 A further possible implication is that the fact that the example itself calls for an example tells us something about knowledge because we in an analogous manner need, in order that we may come to know something, to recur to

something else that we already know, something that the thing we seek to know is grounded in; I thank Pål R. Gilbert for this suggestion.

8 Jirsa (2013, 137–9) explicitly connects the passage under consideration with the dream theory developed by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*.

9 Melissa Lane (1999, 64–6) connects the passage under consideration with *Meno*, as well as *Phaedo* and *Republic*, not because of the dream-motif itself, but because they all discuss the "passage from true belief to knowledge;" see also El Murr 2015, 2–3. I shall return to the question whether or not the *Statesman* passages are centered on the transition from belief to knowledge, a question that Jirsa (2013, 145) suggests should be answered in the negative.

10 The Greek text used is the Oxford Classical Texts, edition edited by S. R. Slings; the translation is by Allan Bloom (1991).

11 See 476a7 where Socrates explains that each form also appears with other forms and therefore may look like what it is not, a plurality; the implication is, it seems to me, that the dialectician needs to be able to distinguish correctly not just between one form and its instantiations, but also between forms. For further discussion of this matter, see Larsen 2021.

12 Goldschmidt (1947, 53n3) connects the *pathos* described here with the *pathos* mentioned at *Phaedo* 73b3–4, arguing that what the visitor is describing in the passage from the *Statesman* is, in fact, recollection.

13 For additional discussion, see El Murr 2015, in particular 6n1.

14 Skemp 1952, 160n1 opts for the latter, Jirsa 2013, 139–41 for the first.

15 *Stoicheion*, "letter," in the later philosophical tradition came to mean element, a meaning that, apparently, has its origin in Plato. It seems that Plato uses *stoicheion* and *gramma* more or less as equivalents in the passages mentioned here; see, however, Ryle 1960, and Oberhammer 2016, 5–7, 10.

16 Carl Prantl is dismissive of the passage, suggesting that it is the only–and at the same time a miserable-trace of Aristotelian *epagōgē* in Plato; Robinson (1953, 213) claims that Plato in this passage "for the first and last time uses the verb *epagein* of leading a man on to knowledge," a claim also made by Nelly Tsouyopoulos. It may be noted, however, that we find the closely related expression *anagein epi* in the *Symposium* at 210c; I thank Pål R. Gilbert for pointing this out to me. For a general discussion of Socratic induction in Plato and Aristotle, see Ausland 2012.

17 David Bronstein (2016) argues that the role of induction in Aristotle's theory of science derives from a Platonic-Socratic problematic and is, in effect, a response to Meno's paradox.

18 For a different take on this passage, see El Murr 2015, 7–9.

19 Lewis Campbell (1867, note ad loc.) suggests that the same nature found in both syllables or letter-combinations is a letter they have in common but proceeds to suggest that this means that "the same idea or law" can be found "in two widely different things".

20 For discussion of the significance of this passage for the treatment of examples in the *Statesman*, see Lane 1999, 81–2.

21 For further discussion of this passage, see the chapters by Cristina Ionescu and Pauline Sabrier in this anthology.

22 The new Oxford edition reads *kai* with manuscripts B and T; I have stayed with Burnet in reading *hos* with manuscript W. See Skemp 1952, 160–1n2.

23 J. B. Skemp (1952, 160n2) observes that "περὶ ἑκατερον cannot be taken with συναχθέν". He renders the context loosely: "has been made the basis of a parallel examination of both"; Schleiermacher translates it as "herbeigebracht" while Rowe translates it as "having been brought together".

24 I am not suggesting that justice in city and soul is composed of elements in any strict sense of the word; what they have in common is rather a structural likeness or what Campbell calls "an idea or law"; see note 19 above.
25 The question whether or not Plato modified his conception of *doxa* in the supposedly later dialogues is notoriously controversial and I cannot enter into the discussion of it here.
26 I thank Vasilis Politis for pointing out this important feature of Plato's ideal of inquiry to me.
27 Kerferd 1981, 64; Kahn 1996, 292.
28 It may seem a bit odd that someone should ask for a *logos* for something that needs no *logos*—I take it that *logos* is used with two different meanings at 285e2 and 285e3; at 285e2 it means the account of something the questioner asks about ("what is it?"), while it at 285e3 refers to something like an argument that one might offer concerning something for which the account in the former sense is difficult to present.
29 For a thoughtful discussion of the use of examples in inquiry as discussed in the *Statesman* and of the account of different types of images in the *Sophist*, see Ionescu 2020.
30 I thank Hayden Ausland, Pål Rykkja Gilbert, Vivil Valvik Haraldsen, Vasilis Politis, Justin Vlasits, and Roslyn Weiss who have all read various versions of this chapter and made several valuable suggestions. All mistakes remaining are due solely to the author.

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7 Examples in the *Meno*

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Introduction

Throughout his corpus of dialogues, Plato frequently depicts Socrates deploying an example, or a model (παράδειγμα), to clarify a difficult concept to a struggling interlocutor, or indeed to aid him in pursuing an idea that may, for both himself and his interlocutor, be obscure or shrouded in darkness. He often holds out the hope that these topics can be clarified or illuminated through the use of a well-chosen example. Perhaps the most famous instance of this is Socrates' introduction of the city/soul parallel at *Republic* 368c5–369a4. Whereas in most cases it is up to the reader to recognize the full significance of a given example to the inquiry at hand, there is one place—*Statesman* 277d1–279a1—where Plato makes explicit, and indeed thematizes, the importance of the use of examples in philosophical inquiry more generally. Here the visitor from Elea explains to his young interlocutor the importance of examples both in relation to their own inquiry into the nature of the statesman, and, as he says, "to demonstrate something regarding the more significant subjects"[1] (ἐνδείκνυσθαί τι τῶν μειζόνων). The visitor then goes on to explain what he thinks an example is and how it operates in a philosophical inquiry. The *Statesman* account is clearly aimed at illustrating the utility of examples for understanding difficult concepts; the procedure recommended here involves taking a thing or concept with which one is familiar in a given context, and considering that same thing or concept in an unfamiliar context. This, it is hoped, will enable one to recognize that, despite the novelty of the new context, the thing or concept in question operates in the same, or in a relevantly similar, way. Thus, as Plato says through the Eleatic visitor, one uses examples whenever "being the same in something different and separate, [a given thing] is correctly identified there, and having been brought together [with the original thing], results in a single true judgment about each individually and both together."[2] This, it is hoped, will give shape to our hazy, dreamlike knowledge of these concepts, and bring them into the clarity and certainty of waking life.[3]

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Whereas this passage from the *Statesman* focuses on the importance of examples for the understanding of difficult concepts, it is clear that Plato also acknowledges their utility for the structuring of an inquiry itself. That is, he recognizes their role as a dialectical tool for indicating how one ought, ideally, to pursue such an inquiry.[4] The evidence for this comes from Plato's own procedure, and in particular from those instances in which he has Socrates produce the sort of answer that he expects to receive from an interlocutor to a "What is it?" (*ti esti*) question. In these cases, Socrates provides such an answer in relation to a more familiar, or everyday (φαῦλον) thing or concept, thus furnishing his interlocutor with an example of how he would like him to answer the question in relation to a more difficult or obscure thing or concept. There are three instances in the corpus where this tool is employed in a particularly clear way—*Meno* 73e3–76e4, *Theaetetus* 146e7–147c6, and *Laches* 191e9–192b3—which make these passages especially useful for studying it.

The most striking instance of the procedure described above is undoubtedly *Meno* 73e3–76e4. In what follows I will focus primarily on this passage. The questions I intend to address are the following: What is Plato's aim in depicting Socrates deploying this dialectical tool? Is the intent merely to have him demonstrate to Meno that some aspect of the answer he has provided to the question "What is virtue?" has missed the mark? Or, does Plato think that the answers that Socrates provides to the example questions "What is shape?" and "What is color?" are not only illustrative of Meno's error in responding to the question as he has, but are also adequate definitions in their own right? Some recent critics have defended the view that Socrates' answers here could not, and are not intended to, constitute adequate definitions of the proposed *definienda*, but are supposed merely to identify things that are designated by the words used to signify those *definienda*. Against this view, I shall argue that Plato does intend for Socrates to pose and answer, precisely, the *ti esti* question in respect of these more everyday things, and that he thinks that the answers that Socrates provides to these questions are true and adequate definitions of the things or concepts to which they are addressed. In other words, I shall argue that in this passage Socrates poses the *ti esti* question about three different things/concepts, that he offers what he takes to be three true and adequate answers, and that he does so as a dialectical tool to assist Meno in pursuing an answer to the question "What is virtue?". As we shall see, there is clear evidence that, in this passage, Socrates takes himself to be proceeding dialectically, rather than eristically.[5] And dialectic, for Plato, as opposed to eristic, is concerned with the search for the essences of things.[6] This, as we shall see, is true of familiar, everyday things no less than more difficult and obscure things or concepts.

The deployment of this dialectical tool is not limited to the *Meno*: Socrates also uses it explicitly to assist his interlocutors in both the

Laches and the *Theaetetus*. These other cases of it indicate that its use in the *Meno* does not represent an isolated or special case specific to the context of that inquiry; it rather indicates that what we find in the *Meno* is an instance of the use of a tool that is applicable to a variety of contexts, and useful in assisting a range of interlocutors.[7] By placing both the *Laches* and the *Theaetetus* passages alongside our analysis of the *Meno*, we will see more clearly both how Socrates uses this tool to help his discussion partners pursue their specific inquiries, and how he connects the questions: "What is F?" and "What is that which is specified by the word 'F'?". If the argument of this chapter is along the right lines, then there are two important lessons for dialectic that we can draw: (1) Plato's dialectical practice can be used to pursue the essences of everyday things and concepts, just as it can be used to discover the essences of more difficult and obscure things and/or concepts (τά μέγιστα); and (2) dialectic, for Plato, is just as much about the meanings of the words we use to designate things, as it is about the essences of those things.

Meno 73e3–76e4

The *Meno* begins with the character Meno posing the following series of questions to Socrates: "Is virtue [ἡ ἀρετή] teachable? Or, is it not teachable but achieved through practice? Or, is it neither reached through practice, nor learned, but does it come to be present in people by nature, or in some other way?" (70a1–4). This leads Meno to offer a number of definitions of virtue, all of which are deemed to be inadequate because they fail to give a sufficiently unitary account of the concept.

Meno's difficulty in defining virtue prompts Socrates to assist him by offering a sample definition of a different concept. After Meno admits that he is unable to find one account of virtue covering all cases, Socrates says that there are many shapes, just as there are many colors, and since in each of these cases you call the multitude by a single name, despite the fact that some pairs among the multitude are opposite to one another, you should be able to say what that thing, shape, is that encompasses both the round and the straight.[8] Socrates then poses the question: "What in the world is this thing, which has this name, shape?" (74e11). He encourages Meno to answer, indicating that he should treat this as an exercise (μελέτη) in preparation for his answer about virtue.[9] After Meno insists that Socrates provide the answer about shape himself, on the condition that Meno will provide the answer about virtue, Socrates tells us that shape is "that which, alone among existing things, always follows color" (75b9–11).

Meno objects that someone might not know what color is, and thus might be in the same quandary about color as she is about shape. Socrates agrees, and in response articulates what has come to be known as his *dialectical requirement*.[10] This is the idea that in order to conduct an inquiry

dialectically (rather than eristically), one should reply to questions truly and should use terms that are familiar to all parties. This leads Socrates to his second definition of shape. Shape, he says, is the "limit of a solid."

Meno next asks Socrates what he says color is. Socrates replies that he will answer as Gorgias would, so that Meno will be able to follow him more easily. He begins by clarifying that Meno maintains, as Empedocles does, that things have effluences (ἀπορροάι), and that there are channels (πόροι) through which those effluences are conveyed. There is also, he confirms, something that Meno calls sight (ὄψις). After establishing all this, Socrates goes on to define color as: "the effluence of shapes from things that are commensurate with sight and perceptible." Meno is pleased with this answer, but Socrates says that, for his part, he has convinced himself that the answer that he gave about shape is the better answer.

Shape and Color

Let us now consider Socrates' sample definitions—two of shape, and one of color—in more detail. For reasons that will emerge presently, it will be easiest to begin with the definition of color, and then proceed to consider the two definitions of shape. There are at least two good reasons to think that Socrates takes the definition he gives of color to be true and adequate. First of all, when Meno asks Socrates at 75c4–7, immediately after he has given his initial definition of shape as that which always follows color, how he would answer someone who is just as puzzled about what color is as she is about what shape is, Socrates responds emphatically that he would answer with the truth (τἀληθῆ ἔγωγε, 75c8). This gives us some prima facie indication that Plato intends the reader to take it that Socrates considers his subsequent definition of color to be true.

Secondly, there is another place in Plato where we find a definition of color. At *Timaeus* 67b5–7, and as part of a wider account of the sensory capacities, how they operate and what their objects are, Plato has the character Timaeus give what amounts to a definition of color that is, both in its content and in the language used to express it, very similar to the one Socrates gives in the *Meno*. In the *Timaeus* color is said to be a "flame that flows from bodies and has parts commensurate with sight so as to be perceived" (φλόγα τῶν σωμάτων ἑκάστων ἀπορρέουσαν, ὄψει σύμμετρα μόρια ἔχουσαν πρὸς αἴσθησιν). The similarities between these definitions are, I think, obvious: they both involve something flowing forth (ἀπορρεῖν) from bodies, and they both stipulate that that which flows must be proportional to or commensurate with the mechanism of sight.[11] One interesting difference, though, is that whereas in the *Meno* account the effluences are specifically identified as shapes (σχήματα), in the *Timaeus* what flows out from bodies is said to be a flame with a certain composition of parts.[12] This apparent difference, however, may not turn out to be as big as it seems, for earlier in the *Timaeus* it has been

argued that fire and the other three elements are bodies that possess particular geometrical microstructures; these microstructures, Timaeus tells us, are themselves shapes—the so-called Platonic solids—that are formed out of the combination of scalene and isosceles right triangles.[13] Furthermore, it emerges through the course of Timaeus' account that it is these microstructures that are, causally responsible for producing the awareness of the sensible qualities in the souls of sentient creatures.[14] Thus, when Timaeus says that color is a flame that flows from bodies, we have good reason to understand this along the same lines as the *Meno* account, that is, in terms of the efflux of geometrical figures (understood as the specific microstructure that underlies fire) from the bodies in question.[15]

If, in the case of Socrates' definition of color in the *Meno*, the evidence that Plato presents it as true and adequate is relatively clear, the situation with his two definitions of shape (σχῆμα) is much more murky. First of all, there is the bald fact that he offers up two definitions. It is, of course, clear why he does so: Meno is unhappy with his first definition, on the grounds that it depends upon the as yet undefined concept of color. However, it is not clear whether the reader is meant to think that Socrates takes both of these two, apparently irreducible, accounts to be true and adequate definitions of a single concept, shape. It has been argued that, in general, Plato thinks that, in order to be adequate, definitions need to satisfy certain requirements, among which is the stricture that they must be unitary.[16] That is, there must be only one definition corresponding to a given thing or concept. This is, precisely, what Socrates has found to be objectionable in Meno's initial attempts to define virtue, namely that these attempts ended with Meno providing a number of complex and fragmented definitions of an ostensibly unitary concept. It seems to me, however, that there is reason to think that Socrates does not intend his two accounts here as two different and irreducible definitions of a single concept; for there are indications that Meno's request forces Socrates to change the *definiendum* slightly but significantly between the first account and the second.

As we've seen, Socrates initially defines shape as "that which, alone among existing things, always follows color." While we do not find in the corpus another instance in which Plato defines shape, as we do in the case of color, Plato does, throughout his writing, closely associate shape with color, often mentioning them together in the same breath,[17] and on a number of those occasions, using some form of the locution χρῶμα τε καὶ σχῆμα, in order, I take it, to underscore the close link between them.[18] This lends some initial credence to the idea that Socrates thinks of the relation between color and shape as a close one. But let us see if there is any further reason for thinking that, for Socrates, shape should be defined in terms of color.

It is striking, and, I think, revealing that Socrates defines shape in terms of color in the *Meno*. It has led some critics to doubt that what Plato gives

us here could possibly qualify as a definition of shape. Instead, they see it as nothing more than a factual claim.[19] However, I think that instead of assuming that we know what Socrates' *definiendum* is here and that we know how it should, and should not, be defined, we should rather consider the definition that Socrates chooses to give, and see if we can infer from it anything about the *definiendum*. Defining shape here in terms of a directly perceptible property like color indicates that Socrates is addressing a very specific *definiendum*: it indicates straight away that he is restricting his definition to what we might call *visible* shape.[20] It does so because there is reason to think that, for Plato in particular, geometrical shape need not, and cannot, be defined in terms of color.[21] If Socrates is restricting his *definiendum* here to *visible* shape, we may wonder what Socrates' definition tells us about it. Through his definition of color, as we've seen, Socrates characterizes color as a property that is directly perceptible by the senses—perceptibility is part of its definition. There is some indication however that, according to Plato, a straightforward definition in terms of perceptibility is not available in the case shape. For one thing, Plato never lists shape among those properties that are directly perceptible by the senses.[22] Secondly, if Plato thought that shape were directly perceptible by the senses in the way that color is, we would have expected him to have Socrates give a definition in terms of its perceptibility in the *Meno*, rather than the one he does give in terms of color.

If shape is not directly perceptible by the senses, and if Socrates' initial *definiendum* here is what we have been calling *visible* shape, then we may wonder how, according to Plato, one becomes aware of *visible* shape. Based on Socrates' definition of it in the *Meno*, as that among existing things that always follows color, I would like to suggest that, for Plato, *visible* shape is a property of bodies that is inferred on the basis of some other, directly perceptible, property—namely, color. That Socrates is thinking about color and *visible* shape in this way in the *Meno* is lent some further credence by the verb that he uses to describe the relation between the two. In his first definition he says that shape is that alone among existing things that always *follows* (ἑπόμενον) color. The verb ἕπεσθαι carries the meaning of "following from," as one proposition follows from another as its consequent.[23] If this is the sort of relation that Socrates has in mind between *visible* shape and color—namely, that the former is a property that is inferred on the basis of the direct perception of the later—then it would be perfectly reasonable for him to define *visible* shape as he does.

What, then, of Socrates' second definition of shape? After Meno's objection, Socrates begins by clarifying that his interlocutor is familiar with the terms that indicate that something is limited, and bounded, and that he is also acquainted with the terms used to describe something as a surface and a solid. This is, of course, Socrates' way of confirming that Meno is familiar with the concepts he will use to express his next definition, in

conformity with the dialectical requirement upon which they have just agreed, but I think it also allows Socrates to alter and specify the scope of his subsequent definition. If we attend closely to the concepts of which Socrates makes use in this definition, we will see that there is reason to think that the scope of the second definition is different from the previous instance. Shape, Socrates says, is the limit of a solid.[24]

It is revealing that Socrates presents this definition in terms of the concepts: solidity (στερεόν) and limit (πέρας). This, coupled with his clarification that when he asks Meno if he calls something a surface (ἐπίπεδον) and a solid (στερεόν) he means those terms as they are used in geometry (ἐν ταῖς γεωμετρίαις), give us a strong indication that Socrates has shifted the *definiendum* from a visible/perceptible context to a geometrical/mathematical context.[25] If Socrates does, in fact, shift his *definiendum* to the geometrical/mathematical context between his first and second definitions, then a second definition in terms of perceptibility, or any directly perceptible property, would be wholly inappropriate. Based on this, we can say that Socrates' two *definienda* in this passage—*visible* shape and *geometrical* shape—differ in important ways, and, as such, we should not be surprised when he gives substantially different definitions of them.[26]

Why, we may ask, does Plato have Socrates proceed in this way? Why does he begin by defining *visible* shape, and only after Meno objects, does he change his *definiendum* to *geometrical* shape? The answer, I think, has to do with what he is trying to achieve by means of these sample definitions. As mentioned above, the dialectical tool that Socrates employs here requires that he provide a sample definition of a more everyday thing or concept in order to show his interlocutor how he should approach an inquiry into a more difficult or obscure thing or concept. It stands to reason that *visible* shape, given that it is part of our regular daily experience, is a more everyday concept than *geometrical* shape. Socrates, therefore, reasonably chooses to begin by defining a concept that is closer to Meno's lived experience, and is then forced by Meno's objection to shift to defining something significantly more obscure.

One might reasonably wonder whether a move like the one I have proposed—changing the *definiendum* on an interlocutor without making it clear that he is doing so—would constitute dialectical malpractice by Socrates. I think that it most certainly would, if the primary question under consideration were the one that Socrates poses at 74b5: "What is shape, Meno?" (τί ἐστιν τὸ σχῆμα, ὦ Μένων;). If this were their primary question, then of course Socrates would need to be absolutely clear whether it is *visible* shape or, on the contrary, *geometrical* shape that he is defining. However, as we've seen, this question is only raised in order to help Meno understand how he should approach an answer the question: "What is virtue?" (τί ἐστίν ἀρετή, 79c4). In particular, the aim is to help Meno see how he can give a unitary definition of virtue, just as Socrates has done for shape: first for all *visible* shape, then for *geometrical* shape.

In other words, it is immaterial what the *definiendum* is in these cases, so long as it is defined truly and adequately, and so that Meno can see why the candidate definitions he has given of virtue thus far have failed to satisfy Socrates. This procedure is about showing Meno how a dialectical inquiry should proceed, not necessarily about demonstrating to him something about the target of that particular inquiry.

One Question, or Two?

About a decade and a half ago, David Charles entered the scholarly fray surrounding this section of the *Meno*, and summarized the state-of-the-art consensus on Socrates' procedure here using the following slogan: "one good question, several distinct and conflated answers."[27] The good question is, of course, the *ti esti* question. The "several distinct and conflated answers" refers to the three definitions discussed above. According to Charles, commentators see the first definition of shape as a "true factual claim which identifies the phenomenon"; they regard the second definition of shape as an instance of a "conceptual definition"; and they consider the definition of color as a "real definition." Charles, for his part, attempts to save Socrates from the utter confusion attributed to him by those commentators who, in one way or another, endorse the slogan,[28] by arguing that Socrates is not asking one kind of question to which he confusedly provides several different kinds of answers, but is rather asking at least two distinct sorts of questions. Against Charles, and in line with the analysis I have offered above, I argue that Socrates asks one type of question, the *ti esti* question, about three concepts—*visible* shape, *geometrical* shape, and color—in response to which he gives, what he takes to be, three true and adequate answers.

Charles' position is that whereas Socrates certainly asks, and is interested in answering, the "What is F?" question in the *Meno*, he also asks another type of question, which is expressed in a number of ways, but is basically the question: "What do you call F?" or "To what does the name, 'F', apply?". According to Charles, the second type of question is a question about "which object a linguistic term signifies (or names)," whereas, the first type of question "focuses on the nature (or essence) of the object which is signified (or named)."[29] We should note that it is clear that Charles' argument is not merely that it is possible for one to distinguish these two types of questions on Socrates' behalf, it is rather that Socrates himself distinguishes between them,[30] and that, according to Charles, it is this conscious move that allows Socrates to escape the accusation that he was confused. For, as Charles says, the requirements placed on an adequate answer to the question about which object a linguistic term signifies (let us call questions of this type "type two questions") are less stringent than those placed on an answer to a question about the nature or essence of a thing (let us call these "type one questions"). Thus,

according to Charles, the true factual claim, and the conceptual definition that Socrates gives us in his two definitions of shape, are acceptable as answers to the question about the meaning of the linguistic term, σχῆμα, but not as answers to the question "What is shape?". Charles' conclusion, however, is that despite having made this useful distinction, Socrates ultimately stumbles, because he fails to make use of it consistently throughout the remainder of the dialogue.[31]

Charles' analysis is correct on the linguistic point: the questions posed in this section of the dialogue do appear to use two distinguishable locutions. For example, at 74b5, as we have seen, Socrates asks: "What is shape?" (τί ἐστιν σχῆμα), whereas at 74e11 Socrates asks: "What in the world is this thing, which has this name, shape?" (τί ποτε οὖν τοῦτο οὗ τοῦτο ὄνομά ἐστιν, τὸ σχῆμα;). However, the question is whether there is good evidence that in using these expressions, Plato intends to have Socrates pose and answer two distinct kinds of questions, or whether there is a single core question—the *ti esti* question—that he expresses using different locutions. I think that if we look closely at how Plato proceeds in the *Meno*, as well as how he uses these locutions when he depicts Socrates asking similar questions elsewhere in the corpus, we will see that the answer is clearly that Socrates is posing a single core question that he is expressing in different ways.

Let us look more closely at the way in which Socrates poses these questions throughout this section of the *Meno*. It is undeniable that, from a linguistic point of view, we do find the two types of questions that Charles identifies. For example, at 71d5 Socrates asks Meno "What do you say virtue is?" (τί φῂς ἀρετὴν εἶναι;), whereas at 72c9–d1 after explaining to Meno that even if there are many different kinds of virtue, they all have one and the same form, on account of which they are all virtues (ἕν γέ τι εἶδος ταὐτὸν ἅπασαι ἔχουσιν δι' ὃ εἰσὶν ἀρεταί), he says that it is right for one to look to this form in explaining "what virtue happens to be" (ὃ τυγχάνει οὖσα ἀρετή). This latter passage seems to indicate that Socrates is concerned with what the being, or essence (οὐσία), of virtue is, despite the fact that he couches his initial question to Meno in terms of what Meno *says* virtue is. This is corroborated by Socrates' explicit reference to οὐσία in the passage that immediately precedes this when at 72b1 he asks Meno to consider the implications that would follow if he had asked him, with respect to essence, what a bee is (εἴ μου ἐρομένου μελίττης περὶ οὐσίας ὅτι ποτ'ἐστίν). We also find Socrates using a mixture of locutions when he asks about shape. He begins at 74b5 by asking Meno if it would be adequate if someone were to ask him: "What is shape, Meno?" (τί ἐστιν σχῆμα, ὦ Μένων;), and he were to reply: "roundness." This clear and unambiguous instance of the *ti esti* question occurs as Socrates is elaborating the point he has just made at 72c—namely, that just as in the case of virtue, so too in the case of shape, there is a single form to which one should look when saying what it is. He goes on to rephrase the

question, however, in ways consistent with Charles' type two question, e.g., at 74e11 he says "What in the world is this thing, which has this name, shape?" (Τί ποτε οὖν τοῦτο οὗ τοῦτο ὄνομά ἐστιν, τὸ σχῆμα;), and there is nothing at all to indicate that within the span of half a Stephanus page the core question has changed.

If we assume that Charles is correct, and Socrates does distinguish in the *Meno* between type one and type two questions, a number of serious difficulties arise. First, it isn't at all clear what the relation between these two types of questions is: Is answering a type two question about F necessary for answering the type one question about F? If not, what is the purpose of posing and answering type two questions? How does it advance the inquiry into what F is? Moreover, it isn't clear why Socrates should pose type two questions about shape, and give type two answers to those questions, but pose a type one question about color, and provide a type one answer to that question, as, it seems, we must suppose he does on Charles' reading. Is there something in what Socrates says to indicate that he has shifted from the one question to the other?[32] It is likewise puzzling why Socrates should say at the end of the passage we have been considering, that he prefers his answer about shape—a type two answer—to his answer about color—a type one answer. Given, moreover, that Socrates is ultimately interested in receiving from Meno an answer to a type one question with respect to virtue, how would it be helpful to him for Socrates to pose and answer type two questions in his examples?

There are also other places in Plato's corpus where we find Socrates using locutions that are consistent with Charles' type two questions, and where he clearly has essences in mind. Thus, for example, at *Phaedo* 103c10–11 Socrates asks Cebes: "Is there something you *call* [καλεῖν] hot and something you *call* cold?" After elaborating his point, he makes it clear at 103e5 that he is asking about the forms of hot and cold, remarking that these forms (εἴδη) are worthy of the names (ὀνόματα) that we ascribe to them, i.e., *hot* and *cold*.[33] Similarly, at *Republic* 596a6–8, Socrates asks Glaucon whether they should follow their usual procedure of positing a single form (εἶδος) for each of the many things that bear the same name (ταὐτὸν ὄνομα). These passages provide strong evidence that Socrates does not distinguish sharply between questions of the form: "What do you say F is?" or "What is it that has the name, 'F'?," and questions of the form: "What is F?". Furthermore, given that in the *Meno* Socrates specifically associates the questions he is asking with the search for what it is to be, e.g., a bee, with respect to essence, there is every reason to think that this is precisely what he would like to establish in the case of shape and color, as a means of showing Meno how he ought to pursue it in the case of virtue.

If Socrates does not distinguish between questions of the form: "What is F?" and "What is signified by the word 'F'?," then this may be because he thinks that the names that people use to refer to things should, ideally,

designate the essences of those things. If this is correct, then it indicates that, for Plato, there is a strong connection between the search for the essences of things, and the correct application of the terms used to designate those things. This isn't to say that one will always be successful in one's use of words: one may, of course, err in one's knowledge of the essence of a thing, F, and thus misapply the term "F" when one uses it. But, if the reading proposed here is correct, then it makes good sense that when Socrates encounters an interlocutor, like Meno, who purports to know what a thing or concept, F, is, he begins by asking his discussant what he means by the word "F." In the next section we shall see a little more clearly how Socrates connects these two issues, and how he does so specifically within the context of his use of the dialectical tool discussed above.

Plato's Wider Use of Example Definitions as a Dialectical Tool

As mentioned above, the *Meno* is not the only place where Plato has Socrates deploy the strategy of providing an interlocutor with a sample definition of a more everyday concept in order to illustrate to his discussion partner how he would like him to approach an answer with respect to a more difficult or obscure concept. In this section I will briefly consider two other clear instances of it—one in the *Laches* and one in the *Theaetetus*—in order to: (1) show that what we have been calling a dialectical tool is a procedure that is applied beyond the *Meno*; and (2) provide some further support for the claims, mooted above, that, for Plato, dialectic is just as much about everyday things as it is about τά μέγιστα, and that it is just as much about the words used to designate things as it is about the essences of those things.

The *Laches* begins with a lengthy opening in which Lysimachus asks, on behalf of himself and Melesias, whether Nicias and Laches would be willing to advise them on what they should teach to their young sons in order to help them become good men. Laches encourages them to bring Socrates in to help answer this question, and about halfway through the dialogue (at 190d7–8) the *ti esti* question is posed about courage (ἀνδρεία τί ποτ' ἐστίν). Laches, just like so many of Socrates' other interlocutors, offers an initial definition that, it turns out, is not sufficiently sensitive to the unity and generality that Socrates requires of such a definition; what Laches has offered as a definition—remaining at one's post and defending oneself against one's enemies without retreating—represents an instance of courage, but not the whole of it. This leads Socrates to ask Laches to try to say what the courage is that is the same in all these cases (191e10–11). Just like Meno, Laches doesn't understand exactly what Socrates is asking for, so Socrates provides him with a sample definition. He begins by asking Laches to imagine that he were to ask him what speed, which we find in many different activities, is (192a1–2). Socrates

then asks Laches to imagine that someone were to ask him: "Socrates, what do you say this thing is that, in all these instances, you call by the name speed?" (192a9–10). To this Socrates replies: "I would say that *the power to achieve a lot in a short time* is what I call speed, in the case of speech, running, and all the other cases" (192a10–b3).

Here, just like in the *Meno*, we have an instance in which Socrates articulates his question using both of the locutions identified by Charles. At 192a1–2 we have a typical "What is it?" question, in the type one mold, posed about speed. Then, a mere eight lines later, we have an exemplary instance of Charles' type two question, which incorporates all of the hallmarks of this type of question: it asks of Socrates what he *says* (λέγειν) this thing, which he *calls by the name* (ὀνομάζειν) speed, is. In direct response to this second question, Socrates provides what, by any measure, is a type one answer—speed is the power to achieve a lot in a short time. This, it seems to me, is strong evidence in favor of the idea that Socrates does not, in fact, distinguish sharply between these two types of questions, but that he uses the locutions typical of type two questions as part of his pursuit of an inquiry into the nature or essence of the thing or concept in question.

The only other place in which we find Socrates employing this procedure explicitly is toward the beginning of the *Theaetetus*. Theaetetus responds to the question: "What is knowledge [ἐπιστήμη]?" by providing a definition that includes the subjects that his teacher, Theodorus, teaches (geometry, astronomy, music, and arithmetic), as well as cobbling and all the crafts of the other professionals (αἱ τῶν ἄλλων δημιουργῶν τέχναι).[34] This, like Meno's definition of virtue (and Laches' of courage), is insufficiently general and unitary, and in response Socrates says that his question was not a request for a list of different kinds of knowledge, but that he wanted to know from Theaetetus what knowledge itself is (Γνῶναι ἐπιστήμην αὐτὸ ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, 146e9–10). In order to illustrate more clearly what he is looking for, Socrates poses the question that he would like Theaetetus to answer in respect of knowledge, about a more everyday *definiendum*, clay (οἷον περὶ πηλοῦ ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, 147a2). He explains to Theaetetus why, if he were to answer the question about clay in the way that Theaetetus had answered the question about knowledge, the answer would seem ridiculous (γελοῖον). For, as Socrates points out, it would be useless to give a definition that involves the name of the *definiendum*—e.g., the potters' *clay*, the dollmakers' *clay*—when one cannot understand the name of a thing if one does not know what that thing is.[35] Socrates then says that in the case of clay, an everyday and brief (φαύλος καὶ βραχέως) answer is available in the simple statement that clay is earth mixed with liquid (ὅτι γῆ ὑγρῷ φυραθεῖσα πηλὸς ἂν εἴη).[36]

In the end, Socrates uses this dialectical tool here much as he does in the *Meno* and *Laches*—namely, to demonstrate to Theaetetus why the definition he has given of knowledge is not sufficiently unitary. He does

so by giving a type one answer to the question: "What is clay?". However, I think that Plato also makes a deeper and more interesting point here about the connection between the essence of a thing and the word that one uses to designate that thing. For, he explicitly links the search for the essences of things with the meanings of the words that we use to specify those things when he says that one cannot understand the name of a thing if one does not understand what that thing is. This shows, at a minimum, that he is thinking of the words one uses to designate things in terms of what those things are. If all goes well, when we use a term, "F," we do so in such a way that it picks out the essence of the thing we name. In such a case, if someone like Socrates were to ask us: "What do we say 'F' is?," we would be able to answer by giving an adequate definition; for, what we *say* "F" is, and what F actually is, coincide.

What dialogues like *Meno*, *Laches*, and *Theaetetus* show us, however, is that things often do not go well: it is often the case that people who think they know what the things designated by the terms they use are, use those terms with an only partial, confused, or inadequate understanding. In such cases, Plato presents Socrates as providing his interlocutors with a sample definition of a more everyday thing or concept; in other words, he tells them what *he* says a thing, "G" is, so that they can better see how they should be thinking about the more obscure thing or concept, F. There is, as we have seen, good reason to think that Socrates takes the example definitions he provides in these instances to be true and adequate. This shows that, (1) Plato's dialectical practice can be used to pursue the essences of everyday things and concepts, just as it can be used to discover the essences of more difficult and obscure things and/or concepts (τά μέγιστα); and (2) dialectic, for Plato, is just as much about the meanings of the words we use to designate things, as it is about the essences of those things.[37]

Notes

1 Translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
2 *Statesman* 278c4–6 (translation by Christopher Rowe, 1995, modified).
3 See *Statesman* 277d2–4. For more on the relevance of this passage for understanding Platonic dialectic, see Jens Kristian Larsen's contribution to this volume.
4 By dialectic here I have in mind the procedure that Socrates is depicted as employing when he inquires with someone into the essence of a thing by raising and attempting to answer the "What is it?" (*ti esti;*) question in respect of that thing. Plato uses the sort of terminology that specifies dialectic as a distinctive expertise rather sparingly in the corpus. However, at *Meno* 75d2–7, a passage that we will look at in depth in what follows, Socrates twice describes the way in which he and Meno are approaching the *ti esti* questions that they consider as "more dialectical" (διαλεκτικώτερον). This indicates, I take it, that Socrates sees himself and Meno as seriously pursuing the *ti esti* questions that are posed here—I will defend this more fully in what follows. Furthermore,

given that Socrates says here that he and Meno are friends (φίλοι), and that they are engaging in a dialectical exchange with one another (ἀλλήλοις διαλέγεσθαι), there is good reason to think that Socrates' procedure here, and the examples he pursues, are intended to be genuinely helpful to Meno in his search for the essence of virtue.

5 See Socrates' use of the adjective διαλεκτικώτερον at 75d4 and 5. It is true that the specific context of this comment is about answering *ti esti* questions using terms with which one's interlocutor is familiar, but since this comment is embedded in a section in which Socrates is engaged in the procedure described above, it seems reasonable to assume that he takes himself to be proceeding dialectically throughout.

6 For more on the power of dialectic in Plato, and the difference between thinking dialectically and thinking eristically in the *Republic*, see Vasilis Politis' contribution to this volume.

7 The idea that in these three passages Socrates is deploying a consistent strategy is not new and goes back at least to Goldschmidt 1947.

8 Socrates' statement here is strikingly similar to *Philebus* 12e3–13a3, where he makes the point to Protarchus that despite the variations within the class of pleasures, a class that has parts that are even most opposed (ἐναντιώτατον) to one another, they are all still pleasures. The potential connection between these passages is strengthened when we consider that the example classes that he uses to make this point in the *Philebus* are the classes of colors and shapes. For more on this parallel see Menn 1998, 304–5.

9 That Plato has Socrates use the term exercise (μελέτη) here to describe what he and Meno are doing is striking. It indicates that he thinks that considering and answering these *ti esti* questions about more everyday concepts ought to be genuinely helpful to Meno in answering the question about virtue.

10 For discussions of this requirement see Irwin 1977, 136–42; Scott 2005, 35–7, 56–9; and Fine 2014, 45–56.

11 See also *Phaedrus* 251b1–2 where Socrates describes visual perception in terms of a flow (ἀπορροή) that goes through the eyes.

12 It is puzzling why, given his objection to Socrates defining shape in terms of color, Meno does not also object to him defining color in terms of shape.

13 See, e.g., *Timaeus* 54d5–55c6, especially the use of σχῆμα to describe the elemental microstructure at 55c2.

14 See especially the account of fire being hot due to the sharpness of the angles of the triangles that compose it (61d5–62a5).

15 We should note that this definition of color is embedded in a rich historical context. It is, as Socrates reminds us, a definition that follows Empedocles, and is presented in the style of Gorgias (*Meno* 76c4–8). The idea, I take it, is that Gorgias was a follower of Empedocles, and Meno was a follower of Gorgias, so in presenting an Empedoclean account here, Socrates would be presenting a theory that Meno would be likely to accept (see Sedley & Long 2010, xv). For a discussion of this Empedoclean theory, see Ierodiakonou 2005, 22–23. For the relation between Empedocles and Gorgias, see Diels 1884, 343–368. One might view the proffering of an Empedoclean/Gorgianic account of color here as an indication that Socrates is giving us some piece of rhetoric, as opposed to a serious definition. However, it could equally be the case that Socrates thinks the definition is true and that he chooses to present it in this context in order to assist Meno. Given that the definition recurs in the *Timaeus*, I think, on balance, the evidence points toward this latter reading.

16 For a detailed discussion of this, and the other requirements of definition, see Politis 2015, 44–60.

17 See *Phaedo* 100d1; *Cratylus* 423d4, 431c6, 423b7; *Theaetetus* 163b10; *Sophist* 251a9; *Philebus* 12e6ff., 47a7, 51b4; *Phaedrus* 247c6; *Gorgias* 465b4, 474d4, 474e2; *Republic* 373b6, 476b5, 477c7, 601a2; *Laws* 668e3, 669a1, 797c2.
18 See *Cratylus* 431c6; *Phaedrus* 247c6 (here we have ἀχρώματός τε καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος); *Republic* 373b6; *Laws* 668e3.
19 See Charles 2006, 2010; Fine 2014.
20 I say it is true for all visible shapes, rather than for all perceptible shapes, because this is all that follows from what Socrates says. It is a good question whether Plato thinks that since this definition is true of all visible shapes, it is, *eo ipso*, true of all perceptible shapes; for, it is often thought that shape is both visible and tangible, and the definition that Socrates gives here would clearly not include shape, qua tangible.
21 It is a good question what the relation between *visible* shape and *geometrical* shape is. I don't think, however, that it is necessary to consider this question here. What is important for our purposes is that Socrates presents these as two distinct concepts with two different and non-reducible definitions each of which picks out all and only instances of its *definiendum*. It is this that makes them useful tools for helping Meno.
22 See the various lists of directly perceptible properties, i.e., the short list at *Theaetetus* 184e, and the longer, and arguably exhaustive, list at *Timaeus* 61d–68d.
23 Plato uses ἔπεσθαι this way in a number of places: *Cratylus* 436d4; *Laws* 716d4, 835c6; *Philebus* 62a3; *Statesman* 271b4, 293a3.
24 In contrast to the numerous instances throughout the corpus in which Plato associates shape with color (see note 18 above), there is only one place (*Parmenides* 145b3) where he connects the notion of shape with the idea of limit, and even there, it is not entirely clear how close we are meant to think this connection is.
25 Dominic Scott addresses this issue, but he argues that σχῆμα here cannot mean shape or figure, because this notion only applies to two-dimensional things and Socrates' notion is wider, encompassing all three-dimensional figures. Scott proposes instead that σχῆμα should be understood as meaning surface. Thus, he says, "the point of using the word *schema* is to capture the notion of an outer surface wrapped around (περιβέβληται) a body—that which presents itself in appearance" (2005, 40). I agree with Scott that in the first instance Socrates is clearly using σχῆμα in this wider sense, i.e., to signify any perceptible shape, but my contention is that in the second instance Socrates actually signals precisely how he is using σχῆμα through his association of it with the notions of solidity, limit, surface as these ideas are used in geometry (ἐν ταῖς γεωμετρίας).
26 One might object that what Socrates is doing here is giving first a colloquial and then a technical definition of one and the same concept (for an instance of this view, see Klein 1965, 55–70). Given, however, that these two definitions are substantially different and are, apparently, not reducible one to the other, such a view must admit that Socrates falls foul of his own stricture that a definition must be unitary, i.e., that there cannot be multiple irreducible definitions of one and the same concept.
27 See Charles 2006, 111.
28 Charles identifies Richard Robinson (1953, 49–60), I.M. Crombie (1976), and Jane Day (1994, 19–21) as proponents of the slogan.
29 Ibid., 113.

30 See, e.g., Charles' comment that "the language which Socrates himself uses sometimes blurs the very distinction *he has drawn*" (ibid., 116, emphasis added).
31 See Charles 2006, 120–6.
32 Throughout his paper, Charles characterizes type two questions as asking: "What does F 'name' (or signify)?" (115). However, the language of signification is completely absent from the *Meno* (there are no instances of the verb σημαίνειν in any of its forms anywhere in the dialogue). Furthermore, even when Plato does use this language, it still isn't clear that he distinguishes sharply between these two forms of question (see *Sophist* 243–244, and Pauline Sabrier's contribution to this volume).
33 For this last point, see 103e2–4 where Socrates says: "So, not only is this form worthy of its own name for all time" (ὥστε μὴ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἀξιοῦσθαι τοῦ αὑτοῦ ὀνόματος εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον).
34 For a discussion of the meaning of δημιουργός in this context, see Justin Vlasits' contribution to this volume.
35 Socrates puts this point in the following question: "Or do you think that someone will understand the name of a thing, if he doesn't know what that thing is?" (ἢ οἴει τίς τι συνίησίν τινος ὄνομα, ὃ μὴ οἶδεν τί ἐστιν;). To which Theaetetus replies, "In no way." (οὐδαμῶς).
36 One might object, on the basis of *Parmenides* 130b1–d9, that Plato does not think that everyday things like clay (πηλός), which is raised as an example both in the *Parmenides* and in the *Theaetetus*, are the sorts of things that could have essences. I have argued elsewhere that Plato's point in the *Parmenides* is not that things like clay do not have essences, but that, unlike evaluative and comparative concepts, the essences of those things are not separate, and can be specified entirely in terms of physical constituents and processes (see Larsen 2018, especially 237–239).
37 I would like to thank Vasilis Politis, John Dillon, Keith Begley, Giulio Di Basilio, Didi Dong, Margaret Hampson, Pauline Sabrier, Daniel Vázquez, and especially the three editors of this volume, for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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8 Between Variety and Unity

How to Deal with Plato's Dialectic[1]

Walter Mesch

Plato's dialectic has many faces. Most prominent, of course, is the general distinction between different methods displayed in his dialogues: critical enquiry or elenchus, hypothetical ascension and the twofold procedure of division and collection. But these methods also show a considerable variety depending on the topics discussed, argumentative aims, dialogical settings and the ontological assumptions at play, suggesting an even more diversified picture. In view of these findings, it seems far from obvious that there is one single unified conception of dialectic in Plato's dialogues. Quite the contrary, we find ourselves confronted with the threat of inconsistencies, even with respect to fundamental issues. It is not even possible to give an unambiguous and comprehensive answer to the important question whether, for Plato, dialectic leads to knowledge of transcendent ideas, because in some dialogues this appears to be the case, and in others not, or at least not clearly.

Against this background, interpreters since the 19th century have worked out developmental models, assuming an evolution of Plato's thought and ascribing different methods and conceptions to different sets of dialogues written in successive periods of time. At first sight such an assumption seems natural, since philosophers usually write most of their texts one after the other and not all of them simultaneously. In addition, they often tend to change their minds over time by acquiring new insights or doubts. And apparent inconsistencies can, at least sometimes, be explained on the basis of such changes. When it comes to Plato, however, developmental models are not at all unproblematic. In particular, it is far from clear whether the dialogues show a development or evolution in his thought and in which sense this could be the case. Many assumptions made in this regard have been severely criticised, especially during the last decades, and in particular concerning extreme versions of developmentalism that presuppose outright conceptual breaks between different stages.[2]

I consider much of this criticism well-founded and think this also holds for the developmental account of Plato's dialectic. So even if there is a

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certain kind of development, we still have to ask how the variety and unity of dialectical methods in his dialogues can be understood. In this chapter, I explain why many aspects of developmental interpretations are problematic and suggest a more plausible account of Platonic dialectic. The *first* and introductory section considers methodological matters, with the primary aim of delineating in which sense the dialogues may actually be said to show a certain development and in which senses this has to be denied. The *second* and main section supplements this methodological introduction with considerations regarding the objects of dialectical methods. In view of the special status of transcendent forms, the primary question here is whether certain methods are exclusively concerned with certain objects. The *third* section finally tries to give an answer to my titular question, how to deal with Plato's dialectic. I suggest that both variety and unity are essential features of the dialectical enquiries we find in his dialogues. Plato works with basically unchanging methods, but employs them in a highly context-sensitive way according to an ambitious scheme of philosophical investigation and education.

Dialectical Methods in Plato's Dialogues and their Context

According to a widespread interpretation, not restricted to extreme versions of developmentalism, we have to distinguish between at least three different dialectical methods and assign them to three different sets of dialogues, sorted according to major steps in Plato's career (cf. Robinson 1953^2, 70). In the early dialogues, we find a method of critical enquiry relying on question, answer and refutation. Professing not to know anything important himself, Socrates only examines the knowledge claims of his interlocutors, mainly concerning virtue, and shows why they are not sound. Though searching for knowledge, he always ends at an impasse. In the middle dialogues, this critical and negative enquiry is replaced by a more affirmative and positive method, unfolding definitional knowledge of virtues and leading from hypothetical assumptions to premises or principles. The explanation of the famous simile of the line in the *Republic* articulates the main way this method can be understood. Plato's new constructive approach is dominant throughout the middle dialogues. Socrates no longer professes not to know anything important, but introduces a theory of transcendent ideas that serves as the basis for an articulated psychology and detailed conceptions of ethical and political virtues. In the late dialogues, we finally encounter a twofold procedure of division and collection referring no longer to ideas, but to concepts. With the exception of the *Philebus*, Socrates either is altogether absent, or steps aside in favour of other discussion leaders, who develop new ontological, cosmological, ethical and political theories of a less transcendent nature.

Now, I do not think that everything in this familiar picture is false. There are, of course, considerable differences between different dialogues,

which have to be recognised and assessed, and I consider it appropriate to distinguish different sets of dialogues along these familiar lines. But in my view, it is extremely important not to overestimate and misinterpret these differences. I just mention a few important aspects, without explaining them in any detail.

(1) There is no clear-cut distinction between different dialectical methods simply following each other in different sets of dialogues. What we rather find is a highly complex variation of different ways to combine these methods. Refutations are not limited to early dialogues, but can also be found later and here still play an important role, e.g. in the critique of the Protagorean relativism we find in the *Theaetetus* (see Larsen 2019). The hypothetical method, delineated in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*,[3] is at least prepared by the *Meno* (Stemmer 1992, 262–7). And, most importantly, the method of division and collection is not peculiar to the late dialogues. On the contrary, it seems to be employed in all dialogues, albeit in different ways. This point is of great importance, and I will come back to it later.

(2) The difference between the Socrates of the early and of the later dialogues should not be assimilated to or identified with the difference between the historical Socrates and Plato, in the way suggested by many developmental interpretations. This has often been pointed out (e.g. in Kahn 1981, 305–6 arguing against Guthrie and Irwin). There are mainly two reasons. Firstly, we do not know enough about the historical Socrates to evaluate the accuracy of Plato's account. Although it is very likely that there is some similarity, we simply cannot ascertain it in a substantial way, not even by comparison with other accounts.[4] Secondly, it is extremely unlikely that historical accuracy was Plato's aim at all. He rather tried to show how philosophy has to be carried out, using the Socratic way of investigating as a model. This at least holds when "Socratic" very broadly refers to a dialogical method of questioning and examining knowledge claims concerning the virtues (Wieland 1982, 50–70).

(3) One should not overlook that Plato's presentation tries to mediate obvious differences between his Socrates figures. In the face of this, it is rather unconvincing to claim regarding the content and method of their philosophies "that they contrast as sharply with one another as with any third philosophy you care to mention", as Gregory Vlastos puts it (1991, 46). Socrates in the middle dialogues not only finds the knowledge of virtue he was looking for in the early ones, but his new methodical ways are also affirmative counterparts to his old critical instruments. It is, therefore, unnecessary to suppose he mysteriously turns from a sceptic into a dogmatist. What Socrates in the middle dialogues considers as justifiable is rather what, if possible, defies any refutation. In the *Phaedo* such a *logos* is called *dysexelenktotatos*

(85d; cf. Stemmer 1992, 194). At least in this fundamental respect, the Eleatic Visitor and the Athenian, who replace Socrates in some late dialogues, are still committed to a Socratic view. They may be more assertive, but they still carry out a critical investigation aiming at reliable knowledge and in this regard "there is nothing in the actual processes of reflection exhibited by these speakers that marks them off from Socrates" (Rowe 2006, 167). This constructive move is already prepared in the early dialogues, since refutations here are often ordered in stages, at least indirectly conveying important insights, and combined with gentler dialectical procedures like maieutic and induction. A good example of this is the *Meno*, which has three rather illuminating refutations of three failing, but gradually improving attempts to define virtue (71d–9e).

(4) This methodical link is confirmed by the critical attitude towards the sophists, not merely prominent in the early dialogues, but rather running through Plato's entire work. An obvious connection holds between the *Protagoras* and the *Theaetetus*. In the early *Protagoras* its title character could be regarded as the paradigmatic sophist providing a political education through effective rhetoric. Protagoras here, after all, claims he is the first to pursue the old sophistical art openly, calling himself a sophist (316c–17e). Yet for a critique of his relativism we have to consult its later treatment in the *Theaetetus* (161b–86e). If one considers the dramatic dates of the two dialogues it seems as if Plato deliberately wanted to depict Socrates as critically engaged with this paradigmatic sophist from the beginning to the end of his career, because in the *Protagoras* Socrates is still very young while in the *Theaetetus* he is fast approaching death.[5] Other later dialogues, such as the *Republic*, the *Sophist* or the *Philebus*, also contribute substantially to Plato's understanding of the sophists. Whereas in the early dialogues the critique is primarily aimed either at their deceptive rhetoric, as in the *Gorgias*, or at their eristic dialectic, as in the *Euthydemus*, in the later dialogues the focus shifts to the fundamental attitude towards virtue, being and truth presupposed by both main expressions of sophistry, i.e. deceptive rhetoric as well as eristic dialectic. The *Republic* explains how a bad education can spoil philosophical souls, turning promising youngsters into sophists (489d–496e) and the *Philebus* supplements this by referring to the confusion the one and the many in our *logoi* can cause if its inherent indeterminacy is not appropriately shaped through dialectical method (15d–17a: cf. Schmidt-Wiborg 2005, 159–73).

(5) The critical attitude towards the sophists is not only articulated explicitly and directly in passages criticising them, but also implicitly and indirectly by way of the dialectical practice displayed throughout the dialogues. The methodical and critical links are thus combined with and reinforced by an important dramatic link. For the early

dialogues this should be quite obvious, since here the lively dramatic presentation can hardly be overlooked. Just consider the very telling change of roles occurring in the *Gorgias*, when the rhetorician Polus fails to question Socrates dialectically, whereas Socrates in turn presents a rather long speech concluding his methodical critique of sophistical rhetoric and indicating how a philosophical rhetoric could look (462b–466a: cf. Mesch 2007). Later dialogues are, of course, in general less lively and dramatic. But things have not completely changed. In the *Philebus* we meet a tired hedonist so unfit for the strains of dialectical discussions that a more skilled colleague has to take over to get the depicted part of the dialogue started (11a–c: cf. Wieland 1982, 73). And in the *Sophist*, the interlocutors, looking for the sophist, "find" the philosopher first (253c). Maybe this is the reason why there is no dialogue called the *Philosopher* next to the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. But even if there is no *Philosopher*, possibly because, given the limitations of philosophical writings, it would be inappropriate to write about the highest principles (Szlezák 2011, 32), philosophical dialectic is, without any doubt, a central topic in the *Sophist*. And this not only holds for the famous passage 253d–e determining the tasks of a dialectician in a very abbreviated and controversial way (cf. Hoffmann 1996, 100–110), but also for the larger context, where the Visitor discusses the communion of kinds and shows how to deal with them.

(6) The methodological link between the dialogues originates in the double-sided conviction that there is no good life without examination, since virtues are not helpful without knowledge, and no worthwhile examination without a relation to the good life, since in the end what we really aspire to is *eudaimonia*. The first aspect is explicitly expressed in the *Apology* (38a), the second is implied in the concentration on virtues prominent throughout the early dialogues. In view of the *Republic* both convictions probably have to be taken in a less strict manner. After all, in the ideal state only philosophers live an examined life strictly speaking, although guardians and citizens also are guided by it (cf. Kraut 2006, 232), and dialectic is the only true science, although mathematical sciences are its preparatory exercises (cf. Mittelstrass 1997, 230–43). Nonetheless, the *Republic* famously discusses the good as the highest "object" of learning (*megiston mathema*: 505a), indicating that there is still an essential unity of practical and theoretical perspectives. Against the background of this thematic link, it would come as a surprise if there was any *purely* theoretical investigation in the late dialogues. And, indeed, nothing of this sort can be found. In the case of the *Timaeus* and the *Sophist* this may be less clear than in the case of the *Philebus*, the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, which mainly discuss ethical or political issues. The *Timaeus*, however, is closely linked with the political theory of the *Republic*

by its introduction and by its cosmology focusing on a world for human beings including their good lives (Brisson 1996). And even the *Sophist* at least points to ethical problems through the discussion of the sophistical practice of deception leading to the problem of negation and thereby to the core of the ontological problem.

(7) As explained above, Socrates in the middle dialogues shifts his attention from the critical to the constructive potentials of refutations: What defies every possible refutation can be regarded as knowledge. This methodological link is combined with the conceptual link between the definitional question and the theory of ideas or forms. As most scholars argue, there are no transcendent forms in the early dialogues, or at least no evident examples thereof (Dancy 2004, 4–19). But the theory of forms we find in the middle dialogues articulates what we actually refer to when we ask a definitional question. "What is justice?" more precisely means "What is the *form* of justice?", thereby making it clear that we are not referring to single instances, but to justice as such. Closely related to this is the twofold theory of *anamnesis*, without reference to transcendent forms (*Men.* 80d–6c), and with reference to such forms (*Phd.* 72e–8a). How we are to understand these versions has been a matter of controversy in various respects. There are, however, good reasons not to consider them incompatible (Williams 2002). Moreover, one should bear in mind that already the early dialogues introduce certain forms. The most famous example can be found in the *Meno*, where Socrates asks for one single and identical form (*eidos*) of virtue due to which (*di' ho*) the many and various virtues are virtues (72c). There are also other well-known examples, notably in the *Laches* and in the *Euthyphro* (cf. Kahn 1981, 313). Normally, these forms in the early dialogues are considered to be either universals in a purely logical sense or else concepts. But this leaves open the question how they are to be understood ontologically. Calling them immanent, just because they are not clearly stated to be transcendent, should be avoided. After all, there has to be a real difference between these forms and their instances, one could argue, not only a logical one, if they really *are* essences (Dixsaut 2001, 28–33). Seen from this angle, the forms of the early and of the middle dialogues are more closely related than developmental accounts normally suggest. How the universals or concepts of the late dialogues fit in I discuss in the following section.

To sum up: Instead of breaks, we find a considerable number of links mediating between the different methods, conceptions and styles of the dialogues. Hence, there is no need to presuppose a development of Plato's thought in order to explain these differences, although the assumption of a certain kind of evolution may appear quite natural or even inevitable. What we rather have to do, is to interpret the dialogues themselves and

the manifold relations holding between them. There are, of course, many different ways of doing this. Just consider the groupings of dialogues we already find in Antiquity, assembling Trilogies or Tetralogies according to competing pedagogic schemes, or the dramatic sequence of some dialogues ordered according to the life of the Socrates figure. For Plato's dialectic, however, it seems of prime importance to understand the relation between his different dialectical methods. And for this relation, it again seems crucial to find out whether or not they refer to a set of fundamentally different objects, the early elenchus to universal forms either immanent or without articulated ontological basis, the method of hypothesis of the middle dialogues to transcendent forms and the late collections and divisions to universal forms once again immanent or at least not clearly transcendent. If there really was such a double switch first to transcendent forms and then away from them again, it would be hard to defend a more unitarian interpretation of Plato's dialectical methods. Therefore, in the main section I want to concentrate not only on these methods, but also on their objects in order to reinforce my critique of developmentalism and to work out an alternative way of dealing with Platonic dialectic. Given the great number of relevant texts and their enormous complexity, I have to restrict myself to some vital aspects.

Objects and Methods of Dialectic

As we have already seen, the link between the definitional question and the theory of transcendent forms speaks strongly against a conceptual break between the early and the middle dialogues. Even if there are no clearly transcendent forms in the early dialogues, one should not assume that they are clearly immanent. What we rather find is that the ontological basis for the definitional question here has not yet been explicitly articulated, although transcendent forms, at least in some passages, like in the famous example from the *Meno* I mentioned above, do not seem too far away. The late dialogues, however, are much more problematic in this respect. Here we have to presuppose that Plato had already worked out his theory of transcendent forms, but this theory no longer seems to play a major role after having been confronted with famous objections, formulated in the *Parmenides*, and altered or alluded to at other places, like in the *Philebus*. In view of these objections, many revisionist interpreters have argued that Plato gave up his theory of transcendent forms altogether (e.g. Ryle 1939) or at least transcendent forms as paradigms (e.g. Owen 1953). Now, I do not think this can be true. But before explaining why, the situation in the middle dialogues first has to be considered in a little more detail. In doing so, I want to show (1) that even here transcendent forms are just the primary, not the only objects of dialectic and (2) that in referring to transcendent forms and to other dialectical objects the method of hypothesis works together with elenchus and

division. This not only helps to bridge the gap between the middle and the late dialogues, but also allows a better understanding of the relation between the early and the middle ones. I begin with aspect (2).

There are two main passages explaining hypothetical ascension and its reference to transcendent forms, one in the *Republic* and one in the *Phaedo*. I mainly concentrate on the *Republic*, where the relevant connections are worked out in more detail. Interpreting the simile of the line's famous ascension to the unhypothetical principle and subsequent descent is very controversial, since the explanations for these procedures given in the text are extremely sparse. As I understand it, there are good reasons for thinking that the unhypothetical principle must be identified with the idea of the good and that it is impossible to understand the good here exclusively as a practical or epistemological principle. We also have to understand the ontological relation holding between the forms and the good. The most promising way of doing so seems not to consist in claiming a formal causality of the good for ideal attributes of forms, but rather in taking up the mathematical examples pointing to the central role of unity as a basis for the constitution of numbers and, more generally, of order (cf. Strobel 2004, 130–4). At any rate, there can be no reasonable doubt that the method of hypothesis according to Socrates' explanation starts with forms taken as hypotheses, climbs up to higher ones and, after having seized the unhypothetical principle, climbs down again to forms without using anything perceptible, but only these transcendent forms as such (*all' eidesin autois di' autōn eis auta*: 511c). Basically the same picture emerges from the *Phaedo*, because in the relevant passage the method of hypothesis also undoubtedly refers to transcendent forms (99d–102a, esp. 100b).

Against this well-known background, I want to point out first that already in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*, hypothesis is combined with elenchus and division, at least if divisions are taken in a broader sense not restricted to special features of the late dialogues. For the *Republic* this becomes clear in the discussion of the dialectician following the three similes. As Socrates asserts, we call "someone dialectical who grasps the explanation (*logos*) for the essence (*ousia*) of each thing". Immediately afterwards, this is also said to apply to the good. "Unless someone is able to separate the idea of the good from all other things (*apo ton allōn pantōn aphelōn*) and to distinguish it in the explanation (*dihorisasthai tō[i] logō[i]*), and, going through every [assault or] refutation (*dia pantōn elenkchōn*), as it were in battle, eager to examine (*elenkchein*) things not in accordance with opinion, but with being, to get his explanation intact through all this, you will not claim that he knows the good itself or any other good" (*R.* 534b–c, my translation). As Dorothea Frede argues, the method of the dialectician in this passage is characterised by three features: (1) Dialectic works with *definitions*, since giving the explanation of the essence obviously means to define a thing. (2) This presupposes a

distinction of the relevant thing from all other things, suggesting a method of systematic division and collection as presented in *Phaedrus* 265c-e, even if it is not certain that such a method had already been worked out systematically. (3) The results have to be confirmed through *assault* and *defence*. Thus, refutations according to this explanation of dialectic still constitute a part of its methods (Frede 2004, 149). To my mind, all of this is convincing. For the idea of the good, feature (1) could appear problematic, because it is not clear in which sense there really can be a definition of the good, if definitions concern essences or being in the strict sense, i.e. transcendent forms, and the good has to be located "beyond being" (*R.* 509b). But it should be clear that Socrates here considers it at least possible by *separating* the good from everything else.

In the *Phaedo*, we find essentially the same combination of methods with reference to transcendent forms, although the relevant passage mainly focuses on forms as formal causes for the attributes of things participating in them. Socrates here obviously looks for the strongest (*errōmenestaton*: 100a) or safest (*asphalestaton*: 100d) hypothesis that allows him to get through a discussion without being refuted or falling (*pesein*: 100d). Thus, the relevance of refutations appears obvious. It may be doubted, however, whether definitions are really needed, since one can know *that* everything becomes what it is through participating in its form or proper being (*idios ousia*: 101c) without already knowing *what* this form is. By all means Socrates could confidently claim that every beautiful thing becomes beautiful through participating in beauty without already having its definition. The same may still be true in climbing up to higher hypotheses finally reaching something satisfactory (*hikanon*: 101e), at least if this is only something satisfactory for the actual interlocutors in a given context and not the same as the unhypothetical principle of the *Republic* (Stemmer 1992, 266). If we interpret the passage this way we should rather compare it with the *Meno* where the hypothesis that virtue can be taught is related to the higher hypothesis that virtue is knowledge and then again to the still higher, but not absolutely certain hypothesis that virtue is something good (Stemmer 1992, 264). And for such an ascent we absolutely do not need definitions, since the failure of Meno's definitional attempts was precisely the reason for falling back on hypotheses in the first place. Nevertheless, a certain version of division would still be needed. After all, it is hardly possible to decide whether or not to accept that virtue is knowledge or something good without distinguishing knowledge from ignorance and good from bad. Thus, we can conclude that in the *Phaedo* transcendent forms are objects of a dialectical investigation also working with all three main methods.

In what follows, we will see that such a combination of methods likewise applies to other objects of dialectic. This can hardly come as a surprise since we have already found important methodological similarities between the *Phaedo* and the *Meno*, while only the *Phaedo* clearly

presupposes transcendent forms. But in order to spell this out in a more systematic way I first have to say something about aspect (1) and explain why in the middle dialogues transcendent forms are only the primary, but not the only object of dialectic. At least the starting point for this explanation is fairly obvious: In the middle dialogues only transcendent forms are strictly, permanently and in every respect what they are, and thereby qualify as true objects of reliable knowledge on the basis of an intellectual activity, whereas things participating in them never strictly, permanently and in every respect possess the attributes they acquire through participation, and therefore do not allow more than unreliable opinions on the basis of perceptions. Only perfect being (*pantelōs on*) is perfectly knowable (*pantelōs gnōston*: *R*. 477a). Socrates points this out in a considerable number of well-known passages, not always mentioning all relevant aspects but arguing very consistently, referring sometimes to the difference between knowledge and opinion (*R*. 476c–480a), sometimes to the cognitive presuppositions of acquiring knowledge (*Phd*. 73b–76d) and sometimes to a single example of a form and things participating in it, such as beauty (*Smp*. 209e–12c). And if dialectic is the tool for acquiring this knowledge—as we have already seen in the dialectical passages from the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*—, it evidently has to relate primarily to transcendent forms and help us acquire knowledge of them. In spite of all this, such forms cannot be the only objects of dialectic. On the one hand, it appears to be impossible to attain knowledge of forms without considering perceptible things participating in them. And, hence, dialectic also has to relate to such things, although they cannot be known in a strict sense. On the other hand, there seem to be clear instances of dialectical procedures leading to a kind of definitional knowledge, in which these procedures do not relate to forms. Crucial examples are the Socratic determinations of the human soul we find in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. I consider both points briefly in turn.

Defining a form like virtue in the *Meno* or justice in the *Republic* requires reference to an intelligible unity that is not to be confused with the perceptible plurality of different instances. Nevertheless, recognising a certain similarity or identity between instances of the defined form can be helpful for finding the definition. Maybe it is not entirely impossible to find a definition without any *explicit* inductive component, since transcendent forms are ontologically independent of participating things, and *anamnesis*, at least in the *Phaedo*, has a strong *a priori* foundation in these forms. Yet such a definitional procedure already requires access to the *a priori* foundation of knowledge. And this is more than we can expect for every definitional enquiry and every enquirer. In a situation in which we still find it difficult to remember what we already know, it hardly appears possible to do without a certain inductive component in the definitional enquiry, because then we have to access the forms *through* the things participating in them. It is true, opinions rely ultimately on perceptible

things, in which, according to the *Republic*, being and non-being are mixed, whereas knowledge relies ultimately on intelligible forms or unmixed being (476c–480a). But in order to attain knowledge, there has to be a *transition* from perceptible things to intelligible forms, even if, in this transition, the epistemological distinction between opinion and knowledge necessarily appears to get somewhat blurred, raising doubts about the underlying ontological distinction between perceptibles and forms (cf. Horn 1997, 291–2). I think Plato could very well claim that, considered appropriately, there are no opinions with respect to forms and that what appears as such an opinion really is nothing but an unfinished transition to the knowledge of forms. In any case, there has to be such a transition, and since it is a central task of dialectic to achieve this, dialectic has to refer *both* to things participating in forms and to forms that things participate in. Nevertheless, for Plato there is no real knowledge of perceptibles. Only forms can be objects of knowledge in the strict sense. But if an investigation of perceptibles can contribute to the knowledge of forms and if it is a central task of dialectic to manage this transition, perceptibles must at least be regarded as objects of dialectic in a broader or secondary sense. Although transcendent forms are its strict or primary objects, there is no dialectic without some cognitive grasp of perceptibles. Moreover, even if we had already attained full-fledged access to transcendent forms, including the capacity to understand how these participate in other forms and to define them on the basis of this understanding, it would be an odd thing to assume that such knowledge of forms was possible in the absence of *any* grasp of or acquaintance with participating things. It may, then, not be necessary to rely *explicitly* on any induction or to refer *explicitly* to participating things. But a dialectician should still be able to take account of the participation, without confusing the form and what participates in it (*R.* 476c7–476d5). And this is enough for rejecting any strictly exclusive reference of dialectic to transcendent forms. So, even in the middle dialogues, there is really no knowledge of these forms without any grasp of or acquaintance with perceptible things participating in them.

In addition, Socrates clearly develops different versions of a definitional knowledge of the soul, without assuming that soul itself could be a form. It may be true that he nowhere gives an obvious definition of soul in the same way he gives a definition of justice. But he certainly formulates, discusses and affirms its *essential* properties, which could become part of a definition, like the tripartite structure in the *Republic* (*R.* 435a–441c) or the absence of any corporeal composition and the essential liveliness in the *Phaedo* (78b–80c, 105b–107a). Moreover, these properties of the soul here are clearly not marginal cases that dialectic can also apply to, but central topics of Socrates' investigations. As is well-known, in the *Republic* it proves necessary to work out the tripartite structure of the soul in order to show how human souls can be just. And in the *Phaedo*

the immortality of the soul even provides the leading question of the whole dialogue. Nevertheless, the human soul is only a source of our bodily life or our cognitive capacity, which, through understanding of transcendent forms, can appropriately govern the human body. Thus, on the one hand, it is impossible to deny that in these dialogues it is an important task of dialectic to investigate and determine the nature of souls.[6] And on the other, soul itself clearly cannot be a transcendent form. Soul is only a close relative of forms imitating some of their essential properties. Just consider the third immortality proof of the *Phaedo* (78b–80e). It is quite obvious that here again different dialectical procedures are combined, because Socrates, in arguing for a fundamental similarity or affinity of souls and forms, combines a presupposed division and a hypothetical argument. So, this passage treats of the object-aspect (1) and the method-aspect (2) at the same time. Souls are either composite like bodies or incomposite like forms—this is the presupposed division (again in the broad sense not limited to the stricter procedure of the late dialogues)—, and they can only be mortal if they are composite since only what is composite can perish or die by falling apart—this is the hypothetical part of the argument. The justification of this hypothesis, notoriously, is not really shown, but it is only made plausible by certain indications, pointing towards an underlying similarity between souls and forms (Frede 1999, 64–5). Whereas bodies are visible, souls are invisible like forms. Bodies change permanently, but forms always remain the same, and through understanding forms, souls adjust themselves to their unchanging nature. Forms are of a divine nature governing bodies, and in understanding forms, souls also imitate this divine governance. These indications make it quite clear that the nature of the human soul, understood appropriately, is meant to be ontologically dependent on the forms.

This ontological dependence is further worked out in the fourth and concluding proof arguing that the soul is essentially alive (102a–7a) which comes after the more detailed explanation of forms I already mentioned above. And this dependence also has an epistemological dimension, already present in the second proof referring to immortality as a precondition for *anamnesis* (72e–7a). Hence, investigating and determining the nature of the soul dialectically is not inconsistent with forms being primary objects of dialectic, since it is precisely the soul's *dependence* on the forms which makes this possible. The fact that souls are also objects of dialectic cannot put into question the status of forms as primary objects of dialectic, because on the one hand they themselves can only be treated dialectically in the face of their similarity with forms, and on the other they convey formal structures to bodies, thereby governing them. It is just through these formal structures and their similarity with transcendent forms that souls can become important objects of dialectic. In working out these structures Socrates not only uses the methods of hypothesis and division (in a broad sense), as pointed out for the

third proof, but also aims at refutations. Here again in the Platonic text both aspects, object and method, are important at the same time. This allows me to conclude the consideration of soul as an object of dialectic with a short digression concerning the relevant methods. From the first proof arguing for a circular movement of life and death (70d–2e) until the last one, Socrates always tries to refute objections made by Cebes or Simmias. Even before the immortality question has been raised, Cebes' initial doubts concerning the life and the death of a philosopher already give the decisive motivation for the ensuing discussion (61d). Later he not only puts forth widespread doubts about immortality (70a), but together with Simmias also tries to refine them (77a–e). Against this background, everything Socrates argues for in the whole dialogue can be seen as an attempt at persuading them (*anapeithein*: 77e), implying a successive refutation of their objections.

Let us now come briefly to the late dialogues. I must restrict myself to some remarks (1) concerning the previous critique of forms in the *Parmenides*, (2) the occurrence of forms in the late dialogues, mainly in the *Timaeus*, (3) the relevance of cosmological innovations for dialectic, (4) the status of ontological and dialectical innovations, mainly in the *Sophist*, and (5) the connection of these with the middle dialogues.

There are no good reasons for assuming that Plato gave up his theory of transcendent forms, since the critique formulated in the *Parmenides* is less relevant and much weaker than often supposed. To begin with, the old Eleatic here criticises a theory of transcendent forms introduced by a young Socrates, who obviously still has to learn quite a bit,[7] not the subtler theory of the *Republic* or the *Phaedo*, and still less the supplemented versions of it we find in the late dialogues (cf. Prior 1985, 51–84). As Socrates claims in the *Parmenides* against the Eleatic position, perceptible things can at one and the same time be similar and dissimilar by participating in the different forms of similarity and dissimilarity. It would only be surprising if the form of similarity was dissimilar and the form of dissimilarity similar (129a–b). These are obviously abstract forms characterising not only what is common to things belonging to a certain species, but rather mutually exclusive universal determinations, like one and many, being and not being, identity and difference. Nevertheless, Socrates denies that forms "can be mixed among themselves and again be separated" (129d). And if this is meant to exclude not only a corporeal mixing of forms in the way this might wrongly be assumed to occur in perceptible things, but also any formal mixing such as participation of forms in other forms, then hypothetical ascension, division and collection and refutation referring to forms would be impossible. Is Socrates really unaware of this? Hard to know. In any case, Socrates does not realise that many aspects of Parmenides' criticism concerning the participation of things and the separation of forms are very problematic. Particularly striking is the assumption that the form has to be *in* the thing in order to allow for

the thing to participate in the form, because it is obviously unnecessary for and fatal to a theory of transcendent forms. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates also speaks of presence and community referring to the participation of things in transcendent forms, but avoids any commitment to a literal understanding of immanence (110d). Later he even mentions a greatness and smallness "in us" (*en hēmin*: 102d–e), thereby indicating that there are immanent forms. But, of course, these immanent forms cannot be simply identified with transcendent ones, as we shall see presently on the basis of the *Timaeus*.

Transcendent forms are still important for the late dialogues. This is particularly clear in the case of the *Timaeus*, because in its cosmology the ontological distinction of "what is always the same, but never becoming, and what is always becoming, but never truly being" plays a fundamental role, together with the epistemological distinction between thinking and opinion (27d–28a). Already here the determinations of transcendent forms from the middle dialogues are taken up almost verbatim.[8] Yet Timaeus later in his speech, while discussing the three genera—becoming (*gignomenon*), form (*eidos*) and receptacle (*dechomenon*)—, even more explicitly tries to show why there have to be forms in the sense of something strictly in itself (*auto kath´ hauto*: 51b), incapable of entering into any perceptible thing (52a). They are necessary for the difference between true opinion and knowledge and, hence, indispensable for thinking (51d). Moreover, the paradigm of the visible cosmos, the so-called perfect living being (*pantelōs zōon*), is strictly transcendent. No part of it can enter into the extended matter of the cosmos, but only its images, imitations, or representations (*eikones*, *mimēmata* or *aphomoiōmata:* 50c, 51a). Thus, we here clearly have to recognise different versions of forms, transcendent ones on the level of the paradigm and immanent ones within the cosmos, worked out on the basis of a demiurgical model. Quite close to this is the technical model of the *Philebus*, distinguishing limit, unlimited, cause and mixture (*peras*, *apeiron*, *aitia* and *meikton*) both in view of the cosmos and of our own life, although it is again less clear whether limit refers to transcendent or immanent forms. Regarding ethical purposes Socrates probably does not consider it necessary to decide the matter. But earlier in the text, there are also passages that unambiguously mention problems of transcendent forms without dismissing them (15a–c). And close to the end of the text Socrates explicitly claims that dialectic (*hē tou dialegesthai dynamis*: 57e) is the most exact of all sciences since it refers to being in the strict sense (*peri to on kai to ontōs kai to kata tauton aei pephykos*: 58a), whereas all disciplines referring to becoming (*gignomena*) only lead to opinion (*doxa*: 59a).[9]

The cosmology of the *Timaeus* aims at bridging the gap between transcendent forms and perceptible things by explaining perceptible things as parts of a visible cosmos which itself is explained as an image of transcendent forms (29b). After all, the demiurge throughout aims at making

the cosmos as similar to its perfect paradigm as possible (29e), equipping it, for this purpose, with a perfect soul governing its body as perfectly as possible (30b). And the culmination of similarity is reached in the production of time as an arithmetically moving image of eternity resting in the one (Mesch 2016², 167–86). This cosmological mediation of an ontological gap on the one hand has important consequences for the ethics of a mixed life in the *Philebus*, according to which the aim is to shape our life in a way that makes it similar to the structures of a mixed cosmos. On the other hand, it has important consequences for the science of dialectic, since the different levels of forms distinguished in this cosmological context allow us to explain why dialectical methods primarily working on the basis of transcendent forms can reach further down into the sensible realm and also refer to souls and to perceptible particulars. Dialectic can achieve this because souls and perceptible particulars are constituted by immanent forms shaping corporeal matter on the basis of transcendent forms.[10] The central mediating entity here is the world soul governing the world body with reasonable and regular movements, being imitated much less perfectly by the human soul governing its own body. And the world soul can achieve this because it is constituted by a mixture of the indivisible and the divisible, i.e. transcendent forms and corporeal matter, which are again divided into being (*on*), the same (*tauton*), and the different (*heteron*). As has often been observed, this basic structure is very much reminiscent of the greatest kinds of the *Sophist* (Brisson 1996, 233).

But when it comes to the *Sophist* itself, what about the ontology we find there? Is it really a radically new one, dismissing transcendent forms and replacing them by a logical analysis referring to the different senses of being? I think both claims are highly unlikely. The first claim requires that we interpret the critique of the friends of the forms, put forward by the Eleatic Visitor in his famous discussion of the so-called battle between Giants and Gods or Gigantomachia, as the author's self-critique, referring to transcendent forms in the middle dialogues, and this makes no sense in the dramatic context of the *Sophist* (Taylor 1961, 44–7). Instead, one has to consider it as a reference to one of the Italian schools, i.e. to a Pythagorean or Eleatic theory of forms (Ebert 1998, 86). This, of course, does not preclude any similarity with Plato's middle dialogues. But there is no simple identity, as I will explain in the next paragraph. The second claim is problematic since the text, even though it may be read as distinguishing between different senses of being, gives no explicit analysis of them (Fronterotta 2011, 54). What we rather find is an explanation of the highest or most common forms that we already presupposed when we indicated Socrates' deficits in the *Parmenides* and which are also mentioned in the *Theaetetus* (184–6). While Socrates in the *Parmenides* unconvincingly denies that forms can be mixed with other forms or participate in them, the famous theory of the greatest kinds (*megista genē*) in the *Sophist* shows how forms can participate in one another, focusing mainly

on difference in order to explain sophistic deceptions. And the overall significance of this seems to consist in the formal analysis of a structure presupposed by all transcendent forms. If we understand the greatest kinds along these lines they have to be transcendent forms themselves, even though they cannot relate to one another as species and genera, like ordinary forms (Frede 2004, 148). The forms occurring in the definitions of the sophist or the statesman, it may be argued, belong to a lower level since they are given according to a well-known subordination of genera and species.[11] Do all the divisions we find in the late dialogues refer to transcendent forms? Probably not, but most of them do. Referring only to linguistic distinctions, in any case, will not be sufficient for the purposes of dialectic—we have to agree not only about the name (*onoma*), but also about the thing (*pragma*: *Sph*. 218c). This is also clearly ruled out by the critique of such divisions in the *Statesman* (262a–3b). Dividing humans into Greeks and barbarians must be considered inappropriate because there is no form of barbarity. Quite to the contrary, barbarians are only a part of human beings singled out by a name (Szlezák 2011, 28). Considered this way there is, as far as I can see, nothing in the divisions of the late dialogues or in the theory of the greatest kinds speaking against the assumption that transcendent forms here still are the primary objects of dialectical methods. But what about the famous critique of the friends of the forms we find in the Gigantomachia? Does it really rule out that transcendent forms contribute anything to Plato's ontology in the late dialogues? I do not think this is the case and want to address this widespread assumption in the last step of this section.

The Giants in the *Sophist* hold that there are only corporeal things (246a–b), and the Gods, or friends of the forms, hold that intelligible and incorporeal forms are true being (*alethinē ousia*), whereas corporeal things possess "moving becoming" (*genesis pheromenē*: 246b–c). As the Visitor points out against the Giants or corporealists, souls, which they also regard as corporeal (246e), can only become just or wise through the possession and presence (*hexis kai parousia*) of justice or wisdom, both of which are incorporeal. And these incorporeal entities *are* as well, since whatever has the power (*dynamis*) of acting or suffering must be (247e). Speaking of "power" may sound anachronistic, but can be justified, since "capacity", "potentiality" or "possibility" clearly are too passive and negative (Gonzalez 2011, 67–8). The Visitor's arguments against the Gods or friends of the forms are more complicated and controversial because here, in using the same criterion of power, he first argues that being insofar as it is intelligible has to possess motion, given that knowing means acting and being known suffering (248d–e), and then in a second step goes even further by claiming that perfect being (*pantelōs on*) has to possess life, soul and intelligence (248e). Trying to avoid absurd consequences following from these two related assumptions, several commentators have suggested that motion here should not be taken as real, but only as

something accidental occurring in a thinking soul, and that *pantelōs on* should not be understood as perfect, but only as comprehensive being, including not only immoveable entities, but also things and souls together with corporeal motion and cognitive activities. But this is unnecessary and misleading (cf. already de Vogel 1953 and, more recently, Gonzalez 2011 or Mesch 2011). On the one hand, such a comprehensive understanding would not represent any progress with respect to the position of the friends of the forms, who admit from the very beginning that there are not only forms, but also participating things (246b–c) and knowing souls (248a). Hence, *pantelōs on* has to be understood with reference to transcendent forms as in the *Republic* and as a close parallel to the *pantelōs zōon* of the *Timaeus*. On the other hand, motion can be understood in an intelligible sense referring to dialectical procedures. And this allows us to avoid the absurd consequence that something in becoming known should change essential properties. Against the background of the middle dialogues another important aspect should be taken into account. The *Phaedo* "already shows the inadequacy of the position of the friends of the forms", since a sharp distinction between the changing corruptible and the unchanging incorruptible is not really adequate for the soul (Gonzalez 2011, 78). Relying on such a distinction the third immortality proof already implies a close vicinity of soul and transcendent forms. And the fourth proof finally tries to answer the objections of Cebes and Simmias in advancing the claim that the soul essentially lives. Here, it is true, Socrates does not explicitly draw the consequence that transcendent forms as such have to be alive to provide an adequate ontological basis for the soul. But this consequence already seems to be implied. In any case, recognising that already in the middle dialogues transcendent forms are the primary, but not the only object of dialectic helps us understand why there is no break between them and the late dialogues.

How to Deal with Plato's Dialectic

Coming back to my leading question I want to draw some final conclusions in the light of the previous sections.

(1) Although it is natural to assume that Plato, just as any other philosopher, acquired insights over time and to a certain extent changed already established positions, there are no methodological, ontological or other relevant breaks in his dialogues suggesting that his conception of dialectic can only be interpreted consistently by presupposing a development of his thought in a psychological or intellectual sense. Therefore, one should avoid making strong developmentalist claims.
(2) The only philosophically meaningful development when it comes to Plato's dialogues is the ongoing philosophical articulation of the

single and unitary conception of dialectic they themselves present. In this articulation, we find first an emphasis on refutation, shifting then to hypothesis and finally to division and collection. But this emphasis should not be confused with a successive relevance of only one method at a given time, because in one way or the other they are very often employed in combination.

(3) Insofar as there is no definition without division and collection, at least in the standard case of definitions presupposing a scheme of subordinated concepts or forms, this has to be considered the central method throughout. But the other methods are also important. Refutation is necessary for dealing with inappropriate positions and hypothesis for the combination or justification of definitions, which are either still being investigated or already known. This structure is quite varied in the dialogues, but relevant throughout. In order to adequately understand the methods being employed it is as necessary to discover the reason for the variation in each case (which is mainly found in the topic of the given dialogue and its interlocutors), as it is to see the underlying unity.

(4) This methodological unity, together with the other links discussed in the long main section two above, have an ontological basis in the link between the definitional question and transcendent forms. This link is still relevant in the late dialogues, although here the emphasis lies less on the transcendent status of these forms than on their formal presuppositions and on the possibilities of their application. Nowhere in the late dialogues are transcendent forms abandoned or missing altogether, not even in the very concrete and practically oriented discussions of the *Laws*. The members of the nocturnal council must know not only that the good and the beautiful are manifold, but also in which sense they come together in a unity (966a). And the same is required in the case of other important questions including the unity of all virtues. Hence, it is hard to deny that the members of the nocturnal council have to master key competences of dialectic concerning transcendent forms (Frede 2004, 154).

(5) The plan for this continuous articulation can be seen best in the similes of the *Republic*, although even they present only a very abbreviated sketch. Thus, in the simile of the line, dialectic is only mentioned as a dialectical capacity of the intellect concerning transcendent forms whereas perceptible things and their images seem to lie beyond its scope. But it is, of course, the dialectician Socrates who is presenting all sections of the line and the corresponding way of education in the simile of the cave. This speaks in favour of a broader understanding of dialectic not limited exclusively to the upper half of the line, but also relating to the lower half. It is far from clear how we should understand the way up to the good as the unhypothetical principle and the way down to the sensible world. The cave, however, shows at

least that education through dialectic leading first up to the good and then down again does not start and end with transcendent forms, but on the lowest levels with perceptible things and their images. Such a broad understanding of dialectic fits better with the practice of the middle dialogues, because it regards dialectic as primarily concerned with transcendent forms without being limited to them.

(6) According to this scientific and educational scheme, the early dialogues start paving the way to knowledge through definitional questions and by refuting inadequate answers, thus pointing out the deficiencies of opinions. But part of this task still has to be realised in the middle and late dialogues. Another relevant part here is the hypothetical ascension to higher stages already prepared in the *Meno* and then suggested mainly by the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. This ascent is, however, not accomplished completely in the middle dialogues. As we have seen, there are e.g. good reasons to interpret the greatest kinds in the *Sophist* as the highest or most common forms reflecting formal features essentially belonging to all transcendent forms. And if this is correct, it seems natural to understand this formal reflection on transcendent forms as a late contribution to the ascent mentioned in the simile of the line. The double task of deducing from higher principles and of descending back into the cave again is also carried out in many different versions. Parallel to the simile of the line, but not identical with it, deduction plays a special role in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates suggests that one tests hypotheses not only by ascending to higher ones but also by investigating whether their logical consequences lead to contradictions (101d: cf. Stemmer 1992, 263). Moreover, for getting back into the cave, ethically or politically, the *Republic* and the *Laws* work out two different versions, the first one more abstract, the second one more concrete. Thus, in dealing with the leading scheme provided by the simile of the line, an exclusivist allocation of certain dialogues to certain stages would be inappropriate.

(7) The similes of the *Republic* and other key passages of Plato's dialogues explicitly focusing on dialectic are of primary importance for understanding his thought and have to be preferred to developmental or systematic presuppositions relying on external considerations advanced by scholars. But even these passages should not be isolated from the rest of the dialogues, since they only articulate general and abstract schemes of dialectical methods. And such general articulations are necessarily less rich or concrete than what the dialogues show through the ongoing practice of these methods. How dialectic is related not only to transcendent forms, but also to perceptible things and souls only becomes clear when this dialectical practice is taken into account. This is the reason why I did not limit myself to well-known key passages on dialectic but also tried to bring in and

explain illuminating examples we find elsewhere in the dialogues. As we have seen from these examples there is no need to assume a tension between Plato's explicit articulations of dialectic and his dialectical practice. It simply has to be acknowledged that the concrete understanding of dialectic the dialogues show throughout in their ongoing practice is richer than the theoretical articulations of dialectic. This is particularly clear with regard to the context-sensitive variations of the fundamental dialectical capacities. As I see it, however, very much the same could be shown for the *dialogical* realisation of dialectical methods not explicitly discussed in the key passages on dialectic. I cannot enter into this issue here, but I think it is also unnecessary to assume a conflict between dialectical methods and their dialogical settings identified by some scholars (Roochnik 2003, 133–151). What we find is rather that the key passages on dialectic concentrate on the theoretical foundations of dialectic and not on its dialogical practice shown throughout Plato's texts.

(8) The practice of dialectic can be considered important without relying on problematic assumptions of an external systematic or developmental origin. Before I finish, I would like to explain this in order to point out where I mainly differ from Wolfgang Wieland and Charles Kahn when it comes to the dialectical practice and its ongoing articulation in Plato's dialogues. Concerning systematic issues, it is neither necessary to assume that the practical key competence of a dialectician, being essentially non-propositional, cannot be articulated theoretically in propositional statements, nor that dialogues, differing from treatises, are completely immune to the critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*, as Wieland maintains (1982, 53 and 234–6). The advantages of dialogues can be defended without such a preference for practical competence alien to the Platonic unity of practice and theory. Concerning developmental issues, it is not necessary to tie the philosophical articulation of Plato's dialectic to a temporal succession in the way Kahn's proleptic reading does. Kahn criticises historical assumptions concerning Plato's relation to Socrates and psychological assumptions concerning Plato's development, but still presupposes a problem-answer-relation apparent to a so-called "original reader" (Griswold 1990, 248–50). This is problematic since we know neither exactly when the dialogues were written and appeared nor what an original reader could have grasped. In the book summarising his previous articles, Kahn explicitly grants the first point, but still wants to suggest an ideal reading order for his proleptic or ingressive interpretation of the early dialogues referring to their relative distance from the *Republic* (Kahn 1996, 48). I am not sure whether there is anything like this ideal reading order, but I also think that many problems of the early dialogues are solved in the middle ones. And it undoubtedly is better to interpret Plato's articulation or gradual disclosure of

his dialectic without strong developmental or temporal assumptions (Kahn 1996, 63–5). As I have tried to show, this also holds for the late dialogues. What I want to recommend, in any case, is not to build a hermeneutical or dramatical interpretation upon developmental presuppositions concerning the writing and reading of Plato's dialogues but to combine it with systematic or argumentative accounts of the represented methods and objects themselves.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Vivil Valvik Haraldsen, Kristian Larsen and Justin Vlasits for their helpful criticisms and suggestions.

2 Classical examples of developmentalism are Stenzel 1931 and Robinson 1953[2]. While Julius Stenzel primarily stresses the emergence of a new version of division in the *Sophist*, hereby distinguishing ethical and theoretical dialogues (1–2, 45–71), Richard Robinson concentrates on the difference between the elenchus of the early and the hypothesis of the middle dialogues and claims a "substantial alteration" for the meaning of "dialectic" in Plato's early, middle and late dialogues (70). Other influential developmental interpretations are proposed by W. K. C. Guthrie (1975) and Terence Irwin (1995). Gregory Vlastos (1991) presents a particularly extreme version to be discussed later. Among works criticising developmentalism I found Wieland 1982, Kahn 1981, 1996, and Howland 1991 most helpful.

3 Even if a hypothesis sufficient in a given context (*ti hikanon*: *Phd*. 101e) may not be quite the same as a completely unhypothetical principle (*archē anhypothetos*: *R*. 511b).

4 This view is developed in detail in Klaus Döring's thorough, but sobering study, according to which the modern Socrates research has not yielded *any* universally or widely accepted results (1998, 141). For the many changes in the views of Socrates worked out and defended since the 18th century, compare also Hayden Ausland (2006).

5 I owe this point to Kristian Larsen.

6 Against the background of the *Timaeus* it may seem more adequate to say that souls belonging to a visible cosmos are proper objects of an *eikos logos* not to be identified with any dialectical inquiry. For Plato's cosmology, this clearly is an important restriction to be taken seriously (cf. Mesch 2016[2], 147–67). But when it comes to Plato's psychology I do not find the consequences of this cosmological perspective completely decisive. To my mind, it is hard to deny that in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* Socrates not only investigates forms dialectically, but also souls, and that he does this on the basis of an essential similarity between souls and forms. Is there an inconsistency between this dialectical treatment of souls and the cosmological treatment we find in the *Timaeus*? I do not think this is necessarily so, since there is a cosmological contribution to the ontological problem of *methexis* relying on a mediating function of the soul. I will briefly come back to this later.

7 For more on the significance of Socrates' youth in the *Parmenides*, see the contribution by Francisco Gonzalez to this anthology.

8 In the famous controversy between Harold Cherniss (1957) and G. E. L. Owen (1953) this was the main, if not the only reason for Owen to reject the standard view that the *Timaeus* has to be considered a late dialogue. Since he presupposed that the critique of forms we find in the *Parmenides*

was criticising Plato's own theory of the middle dialogues and fatal for it, he thought the *Timaeus* had to be placed before the *Parmenides*.

9 I thank Justin Vlasits for pointing out the importance of this passage to me.

10 As I see it, this is the ultimate basis for Socrates' dialectical investigations of the nature of human souls we find in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*. And it is also the ultimate basis for the role perceptibles play in the inductive arguments of the early dialogues.

11 For the methods of dialectic this clearly means that divisions here play the central part. Nevertheless, the method of the Visitor, who is introduced as a god of refutation (*theos elenktikos*: 216b), also has a strong refutational dimension apparent mainly in the section on being (Brown 1998, 182). And, I think, the parallel definitions of the sophist, leaving it open at first which one is the most reliable, also show an important hypothetical dimension. On the basis of a rather formal similarity with the angler, the Visitor first starts with the assumption that the sophist has a certain art which in the following six definitions is spelled out in different ways, explaining the sophist as a sort of hunter of young men, an importer and exporter dealing with lessons for the soul, a retailer of the same things, a salesman selling his own lessons, an eristic specialising in verbal battles or an expert at purifying the soul of false beliefs. The sixth definition obviously has a special status since it rather refers to Socrates than to sophists. But the other five are also doubtful, not only because they differ, but also since they all presuppose that the sophist is an artist, which someone having read the early dialogues can hardly find convincing (Cf. e.g. *Grg*. 462b–c where rhetoric clearly is no art, but only a sort of experience, and the same has to hold for sophistry: 465c). All these definitions have the general form "If the sophist is an artist/has an art …" and specify it according to different possible versions of it. This is, however, a problematic hypothesis. In the *Sophist* the underlying problems become explicit at the latest after it has been clarified that sophists claim to know everything which in fact is not possible at all (233a). And this leads to the seventh definition, focusing on the production of deceptive images. At first, the Visitor still seems to maintain that we here find a deceptive art (*techne*: 236c). But after the long ontological discussion when he comes back to the sophist he stresses once again and even more that sophists do not have knowledge (267b–268d). Thus, in the end, I think, the hypothesis that the sophist is an artist producing deceptive images has to be questioned. In fact, he does not really have an art but only a certain experience, routine or dexterity in producing such images. If this is convincing, it must be important for the outcome of the dialogue to reflect on the hypothetical status of the whole argument. So, here once again all main dialectical methods are combined. We find not only the dominating divisions but also hypothetical and refutational aspects.

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9 Dialectic and the Ability to Orientate Ourselves

Republic V–VII

Vasilis Politis

> "Dialektik ist der einzige Weg, um zu den göttlichen Wesen und hinter den Schleier der Erscheinung zu gelangen"—diess behauptet Plato.
>
> (Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe* V. 474)

I

Only a handful of times is reference made to dialectic in *Republic* V–VII through a *dialegesthai*-based term or phrase, and in four of them the reference is through the phrase *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis* (VI. 511b4, VII. 532d8, 533a8, 537d5; the phrase is also used at *Parmenides* 135c1-2 and at *Philebus* 57e6–7).[1] This suggests that Plato thinks of dialectic above all as a power or ability in us. If and when this ability is fully developed and exercised, which it will be only if one is a philosopher and has achieved some wisdom, it will issue in knowledge: knowledge of the highest order whose objects are essences and Forms, and perhaps the only knowledge worthy of the title (see *R*. 533de).

The hypothesis of this chapter is that, for Plato in *Republic* V–VII, dialectic is basically and essentially a power or ability in us, which manifests itself and is exercised in a variety of ways that include, but are not limited to, knowing essences and Forms and the search for this knowledge.[2] This hypothesis has some remarkable and important consequences. One such consequence is that dialectic includes not only knowing essences and Forms and the search for this knowledge, but also the soul's liberation and reorientation (as described in the Cave);[3] and that, for Plato, this liberation and reorientation is part of that which enables us to search for essences and Forms.

I shall argue that Plato characterizes dialectic both as the search for essences and Forms and as the soul's liberation and reorientation. This is indicated, first, at 518b6–d7, when, immediately following the Cave story, it is said that what enables this reorientation is a power or ability present in each of us, and that there is a special art for this reorientation;

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we may suppose that the reference is to dialectic: dialectic as the power or ability of reorientation. It is indicated, again, in a single and continuous passage, 532a1–d1, in which the two characterizations of dialectic—as the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms; and as the liberation and reorientation of the soul—are distinguished and combined. These passages will occupy us considerably.

We must ask, therefore: Why does Plato characterize dialectic in this twofold way? This question is especially important, because the first characterization clearly does not imply the second: we can easily imagine a philosopher who is committed to the search for essences but who does not associate this commitment with any idea of the soul's liberation and reorientation. Perhaps this is why so many critics put the whole emphasis on the former characterization and hardly acknowledge the latter. Our hypothesis provides an answer: Plato thinks that *both* the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms *and* the soul's liberation and reorientation are manifestations of a single power or ability in us, and he thinks that this power or ability is what dialectic basically and essentially is.

We must ask: Why does Plato think that this single power and ability manifests itself in both of these seemingly very different ways? This question will occupy us considerably. The answer, *in nuce*, is that Plato thinks that the soul's liberation and reorientation is part of that which enables us to search for essences and Forms. We must show that he thinks this and ask why he thinks it.

Imagine a philosopher who does not think that there is a particular difficulty in our taking up a search for essences—though the search itself will be difficult, as will be its completion, which is the knowledge of essences. In that case, the philosopher does not need to invoke a power or ability in us, as being the ability that enables this search, and she will not have gained something by postulating such a power or ability that she may not equally avail of by postulating, more simply and economically, a desire in us for this search. Suppose, on the other hand, that a philosopher thinks that there is a particular difficulty in our taking up a search for essences, and she thinks this difficulty is sufficiently major for there to be a real question whether we are even able to take up this search. She may then decide that, this difficulty notwithstanding, we do have a power and ability in us that makes us able for this search. Plato agrees with this latter philosopher, not the former, and this is why he characterizes dialectic as a power and ability in us.

II

The first occurrence of the phrase *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis*, which is at the end of book VI (511b4), does not, on its own, support our hypothesis. The context of this occurrence is the Divided Line, and the point Socrates is making is that the topmost segment of the line represents

reason itself (*logos*) and that which is grasped by reason itself.[4] This is the point at which he says that reason grasps this 'on account of the power of dialectic' (*tē[i] tou dialegesthai dunamei*, 511b3–4). The Divided Line is occupied with distinguishing different cognitive states and their objects; it is not occupied with how and through what process we move from a lower to a higher cognitive state, culminating in reason. For all we can tell at this point, dialectic may be simply a state of knowledge or simply a power to know.

The first reference to dialectic in the *Republic* is not this famous one at the end of book VI (511b4), but a passage early in book V (454a–e). Unlike the passage in book VI, the context of this earlier passage is not what we might describe as epistemological-metaphysical. The context is quite different since the passage is part of Socrates' argument against those who think that, because men and women have different natures, they should also have different societal roles. Perhaps this is why critics rarely refer to this passage under the topic of dialectic;[5] some go as far as denying that it is about dialectic.[6] But it is plain that Plato is here considering what it is to proceed dialectically as opposed to eristically, and considering this in general methodological terms. While it is true that the term *dialegesthai*, which is used here,[7] need not in general refer to dialectic, it is natural to think that it does so refer when, as it is here, it is set against *antilegein, erizein* and the like; an opposition that stands out in the passage.[8]

The passage makes three important general methodological points in regard to good and bad practice of philosophical argument and enquiry. First, it is possible for a person to proceed eristically, but to do so unwillingly (*akontes*, 454a4) and while thinking that he is proceeding dialectically; hence unwittingly. Secondly, what is typically responsible for this, when it happens, is that the person is not able (*to mē dunasthai*) to view (*episkopein*) the subject (*to legomenon*) by making distinctions according to Forms (*kat' eidē diairoumenoi*, a5–7) but is, rather, treating of it in an overly verbal way (*kat' auto to onoma*, a7) and pursuing in such an overly verbal way the opposite sides of the proposition in question (*diōkein tou lekhthentos tēn enantiōsin*, a7–8); here the proposition is *whether or not men and women should have different societal roles on account of their different natures*. Thirdly, a good example of proceeding in such an overly verbal way is this: the would-be dialectician takes up confidently the proposition that people of different natures should have different jobs, observes that men and women have different natures, and concludes that men and women should have different jobs; but in doing this he fails to consider what differences in the natures of different people make a difference in regard to what job they should have and how they make a difference to this (see 454b4–9). The absurd consequences of this way of proceeding are spelled out, and a better way is indicated (see 454c1–e5).

I find two things remarkable in this passage; they will emerge as significant as we proceed. First, it is said that the use of certain forms of words associated with dialectical practice and procedure, however sincere and in apparent conformity with the rules and requirements of dialectic, is compatible with serious failure to think dialectically. We may suppose that this will include words suitable for articulating *ti esti* questions (i.e. words of the form "What is …?") and for articulating two-sided questions and the dilemmas and apparent contradictions they throw up (i.e. words of the form "whether … or …") and all the technical language for dividing things into kinds. The deeper point appears to be that one can conform to rules and requirements of dialectic that can be expressly stated, but still fail to think dialectically (see Politis 2021b, 196–7, 218–20).

Secondly, a certain way of a person's failing to think dialectically is distinguished, and what is remarkable is how it is distinguished: not as being due to the lack of the ability to divide things according to Forms, much less to do so successfully and correctly, but as being due to an apparently more basic failure: the lack of the ability to view (*episkopein*) things in such a way as to be able to divide them according to Forms and to search for such divisions. I want to suggest that the *episkopein* here may rightly be understood as indicating a way of being orientated toward reality; though we will have to look for confirmation of this suggestion. This is to suggest that we may take the question that Socrates is addressing through the reference to *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis* at the end of book VI to be, or at any rate include: What enables us to orientate ourselves toward the objects of reason? This means that we need not take him there to be addressing only the question: What is the distinctive knowledge that is the knowledge of the objects of reason? We must consider whether there is further reason for this suggestion, and what the difference is between the two questions.

III

While the Divided Line at the end of book VI is not occupied with how and through what process we move from a lower to a higher cognitive state, culminating in reason, this preoccupation is centre stage in the Cave Simile which directly follows at the opening of book VII. The theme of the soul's orientation to reality is prominent: how we are orientated as things currently stand for us humans (we are said to be like chained prisoners who see only shadows of fabricated things, 515a5); how we need to be liberated and reorientated if we are to grasp reality and not illusion; and what in the soul enables this reorientation (see 518b6–519b5).

What the chained prisoners see is shot through with illusion. It is true that what they see are images, and images need not be illusions and not all images are illusions (*phantasmata*).[9] But the chained prisoners are described as being subject to a serious twofold illusion. First, they think

that their words designate the shadows whereas in fact they designate the things that cast the shadows: 'And if they were able to *dialegesthai* with one another, don't you think they'd suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?' (515b4–5; trans. Grube-Reeve, modified)[10] Secondly, they take what they are seeing to be (or include) natural things, whereas in fact it is images of man-made things: 'So from every point of view', I said, 'what people in that situation would think of as the truth would be nothing but the shadows *of the manufactured objects* (*tōn skeuastōn*)' (515c1–2, trans. Rowe; cf. *skeuē* at 514c1). It is remarkable that the things that cast the shadows are described as fabrications made by marvel-makers ('puppeteers', *thaumatopoioi*, 514b5), a description that Plato makes much of immediately on setting out on the Cave story and returns to when he characterizes the illusions that the chained prisoners are labouring under.

The Cave is about the liberation and reorientation and ascent of the soul. We must ask: Does Plato intend dialectic, characterized as such, to include all of this or only part of it? There is a notable reference to *dialegesthai* in the Cave, when it is indicated that the chained prisoners are not able to *dialegesthai* with one another.[11] A little later it is indicated that the prisoner who is released from the chains and has turned around is able to engage in dialectic, albeit with difficulty and effort. We are asked to imagine the liberated and reorientated prisoner being presented with *ti esti* questions which he has difficulty answering, which prompt him to be perplexed (*aporein*, 515d6) and which require all his effort.[12] Being occupied with *ti esti* questions is a core mark of dialectic (see e.g. 532a5–b2).

It soon becomes apparent that the chained prisoners are perfectly able to talk to one another; for they are described as vying with one another at remembering the sequence of things seen in the past and at anticipating the sequence of things to be seen in the future, and rewarding and honouring one another for excelling in such exercises and skills (see 516c8–d7). When, therefore, it is indicated that the chained prisoners are not able to engage in *dialegesthai*, and indicated that the released prisoner who has turned around is so able, we may suppose that the *dialegesthai* referred to is not just any kind of talk, but the kind of talk distinctive of dialectic: *that* is something that only the liberated and reorientated prisoner is able to do. This is confirmed by the fact that the *dialegesthai* that is denied of the chained prisoners is occupied with what is true and real and what is the designation of our words (reading 515b4–5 with c1–2, as the two go together): this is not an object of ordinary talk, however sophisticated and skill-involving such talk might be, but the object of the talk distinctive of the dialectician and philosopher.

If this is correct, it is important for our question, for it suggests that the soul's liberation and reorientation is a necessary condition, and an enabling condition, for engaging in dialectic through dialectical reasoning. We must consider whether there is further reason for this suggestion.

IV

In a remarkable passage immediately following the Cave story and serving as a help to interpreting it (518b6–d7), Plato asks what enables us to turn from darkness and illusion to light and insight. He says that what enables this is a power or ability present in each of us (see 518c4–5: *tautēn tēn enousan hekastou dunamin en tē[i] psuchē[i]*).[13] He adds that there is a special skill or art for this reorientation (*technē tēs periagōgēs*, 518d3–4). We may suppose that the reference is to dialectic: *dunamis* here refers to dialectic as a power or ability, and specifically a power and ability to reorientate oneself; *technē* to dialectic as an skill or art, and specifically a skill or art to reorientate oneself.[14] The turnaround or reorientation referred to is that of the prisoner upon his release and liberation.

This demonstrates, practically as clearly and conclusively as we may wish, that, while we know that Plato characterizes dialectic in terms of the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms (we know this from 511b3–d5 and, as we shall see presently, from 532a1–b5), he also characterizes it in terms of the liberation and reorientation of the soul.

This is important by itself. It is also important, if we suppose that the *dunamis* at 518c5 is precisely *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis* at 511b4, 532d8, 533a8, 537d5; and if we suppose that what allows Plato to connect up these two manifestly different characterizations of dialectic—as the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms; and as the liberation and reorientation of the soul—is that he thinks of both as being the product of a single power or ability in us, *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis*.

Remarkable here (518b6–d7) is the clear statement that the process of reorientation must be understood both as a cognitive-epistemic process involving our reason (likened to our eyes) and as an existential process involving the whole soul: 'It is more like an eye that cannot be turned from the dark towards the bright unless the whole body turns with it; it must be turned around, together with the whole soul' (518c6–8; trans. Rowe). We may suggest that, for Plato, what allows us, and compels us, to think of the process of reorientation in these two ways—as involving our reason and as involving the whole soul and who we are—is that they are both manifestations of a single power or ability in us.

V

It is some fourteen Stephanus pages later that dialectic is mentioned again: at 531d dialecticians (*dialektikoi*) are mentioned, and immediately after, Plato provides an extended and especially important characterization of dialectic. Here is the whole passage, 532a1–d1:

> **[532a1–b5]** And isn't *this*, Glaucon, the main theme-tune, the one that dialectic performs—one that, while it belongs to the intellect,

finds its counterpart, in that image of ours, in the capacity of sight, at that very stage at which it tries to turn itself to living creatures themselves, to the stars themselves, and finally to the sun itself? Just so, when someone tries to make his way by means of dialectic, setting out after each thing as it really is, in itself, through reason and without any of the senses, and not giving up until he grasps what good really is, through the use of intellect [or, reason] by itself, then it is that he finds himself at the furthest limit of the intelligible, as our escaped prisoner found himself at the limit of the visible.

Yes,' he said; 'quite so.
So you'll label this journey "dialectical"?
Naturally.

[532b6–d1] And the prisoner's release from his chains,' I said, 'his turning away from the shadows, to the images and the firelight that cast them, his climb up from under the earth to the sun, his inability still to look at the living creatures there, or the plants, or the sunlight, his focus now on divine reflections in water, shadows of real things, not shadows of mere images, and cast by a light no more real than they are, by comparison with the light of the sun—all that engagement with the subjects we've described has the power, we're saying, to bring it all about, and lead what is best in the soul to a sight of what is best among the things that are, just as in our image the element of the body that has the most clarity was led to the sight of what is brightest in the region of the bodily and visible.

(translation Rowe, modified slightly)

I begin with the first part of our passage: 532a1–b5. Here dialectic is characterized as that on account of which (see *tō[i] dialegesthai*) we try (*epicheirē[i]*) to know (*noein*) what each thing is (*ho estin hekaston*), right up to knowing what good is (*ho estin agathon*), and to do this by using reason (*noēsis*) alone without the senses. This characterization is of a piece with that at the end of book VI, when it was said that dialectic is an ability of reason (*nous*) occupied with Forms and Forms alone.

But the characterization is special in demonstrating that to be occupied with Forms is to be occupied with what each thing is, its essence. This tells against the view that Plato's account of dialectic as presented in *Republic* VI–VII is especially attached to his theory of separate Forms as we find this theory in *Phaedo* and *Republic* and other dialogues after the *Phaedo* but do not find in dialogues before the *Phaedo*.[15] On the present characterization of dialectic, Socrates in Plato's dialogues is a dialectician from the moment he raises the *ti esti* question, which means from the first of Plato's dialogues.[16] This is because the *ti esti* question is a request for what each thing is (*ho estin hekaston*); and Socrates insists from the start

that the question 'What is F?', such as the question 'What is beauty?' or 'What is piety?', cannot be answered by pointing to something that is evidently F, such as a particular girl, horse, or lyre of evident and exemplary beauty or a particular action of evident and exemplary piety.[17] Plato holds from the start that the *ti esti* question, at any rate when asked of certain things or qualities, cannot be answered by reference to what is apparent through the senses.[18]

The characterization says that dialectic is that on account of which we try (*epicheirein*) to know essences. This confirms that Plato has in mind Socrates, as represented from the first of his dialogues, as a paragon of a dialectician. For if there is one thing that is typical of Socrates and his insistence on the *ti esti* question from the first of Plato's dialogues, it is that he is all about asking this question and setting out to search for an answer to it, and much less is he about finding the answer and being confident that it has been found.

I turn to the second part of our passage: 532b6–d1. It shows that Plato characterizes dialectic *both* as the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms *and* as the soul's liberation and reorientation. Having just characterized dialectic as the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms (at 532a1–b2), Socrates asks: 'So you'll label this journey "dialectical"?' (*Tí oun; ou dialektikēn tautēn tēn poreian kaleis;* 532b4, trans. Rowe). He directly goes on (at 532b6–d1) to describe the journey of the liberation, reorientation and ascent of the soul as was originally described in the Cave Simile. The first moment in this journey as he now describes it is 'the prisoner's release from his chains, his turning away from the shadows' (532b6–7, trans. Rowe). Plato characterizes dialectic in both ways.

I recognize that my reading of this whole passage (i.e. 532a1–d1), as being articulated into these two characterizations of dialectic, will not be shared by all. While every critic recognizes the first characterization of dialectic, as being about the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms, there are those who deny that dialectic includes the liberation and reorientation of the soul; they argue that it is mathematics, not dialectic, that is responsible for the liberation and reorientation of the soul.[19] This line of interpretation is succinctly summed up (and endorsed) by Reeve (2013, 145–6): 'Now imagine a craft or science that can, first, turn it [the eye] around until it is facing where it should. This is what the training in the mathematical sciences does: it leads reason to look away from the visible world up toward the intelligible one (7, 526e7–8). When reason is looking in the right direction, dialectic enters the picture.'

I confess I am puzzled. I would begin by noting that Plato has expressly said (but not here) that no one, hence not even mathematicians, use mathematics rightly with a view to one's being drawn up toward real being. At 523a1–3, when he says that mathematics (referred to as 'the ability to calculate and count', *logizesthai te kai arithmein dunasthai*; 522e2)

may indeed turn out to be the sought-after lesson (*mathēma*, 522e1), in that it is among the things that naturally guide one toward philosophical and dialectical thinking (*pros tēn noēsin agontōn phusei*), he adds, remarkably: 'no one uses this lesson rightly' (*chrēsthai d'oudeis orthōs*). This, I would argue, means that, for Plato, only one who is already philosophically minded and dialectically able knows how to use elements in mathematical thinking for the purpose of turning toward real being. It is not mathematics that is responsible for turning one toward real being, but dialectic using certain elements in mathematics. The dialectician uses an important element in mathematics, namely, the distinction of things into single, unitary things, capable of being counted. But whereas the mathematician simply assumes this distinction, the dialectician asks what it is for things to be one (*hen*), how we can know what it is for a thing to be one, and what sort of thing *the one*, understood as the standard for things being one, is (see esp. 524e–525a).[20]

The matter would have been clear, had it been perfectly clear that the pivotal sentence at 532b4 (*Tí oun; ou dialektikēn tautēn tēn poreian kaleis*;, 'So you'll label this journey "dialectical"?') is not only backward-looking, the reference of *tautēn tēn poreian* summing up what has just been said (at 532a1–b2) when dialectic is characterized as the search for and knowledge of essences and Forms, but also looking forward to the immediately following lines, when dialectic is characterized as the journey of the soul from the moment of its liberation and turning around to the ultimate vision of the good. I can imagine a critic insisting that the *tautēn tēn poreian* only refers back to what has just been said, and that what follows makes a new and different point, no longer part of the characterization of dialectic, namely, that this journey is the result of 'all that engagement with the subjects we've described' (532c3–4) and, most especially, mathematics.

I am not convinced. The lines 532b6–d1 end with the statement that 'all that engagement with the subjects we've described has the power, we're saying, to bring it all about, and lead what is best in the soul to a sight of what is best among the things that are' (532c3–d1). From what I can see, it is not possible to read these lines as saying that the subjects preparatory of dialectic have the power to take the prisoner some of the way (e.g. that they, and mathematics especially, are responsible for the soul's liberation and reorientation) and that it is only after that point that dialectic takes over. This is not a possible reading, because the lines say that the engagement with these subjects 'has the power to bring it all about, and lead what is best in the soul to a sight of what is best among the things that are'. The preparatory subjects are said to be preparatory of the whole journey, and it is the whole journey that has just been set out (at 532b6–c3), starting from the prisoner's release and turnaround.

In regard to lines 532b6–c3, which describe the whole journey from the moment of liberation to the ultimate vision of the good, we are invited

to take them as spelling out further what is supposed to be included under the designation "dialectical" in the "dialectical" journey adverted to at 532b4: its being already plain (from 532a1–b4) that the designation "dialectical" includes the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms, it is now shown that it includes also the whole journey of the soul, starting with its liberation and reorientation. The following lines (i.e. 532c3–d1) are simply a reminder that this whole journey is prepared for by the preparatory subjects.

I know of one critic who has arrived at the same reading; it is M. M. McCabe, when she says: 'Their journey upwards—which Glaucon agrees to call dialectic (532b4)—is characterized by their increasing ability to reject what they see before them (532c) …' (2015, 102). I recall that my argument for the twofold characterization of dialectic is not based on this passage alone (i.e. 532a1–d1), for the same conclusion is arrived at on the basis of 518b6–519b5.

VI

It is not easy to see how these two characterizations of dialectic—as the search for and the knowledge of essences; and as the liberation and reorientation of the soul—designate one and the same thing. It is hard to see how they can designate one and the same thing, if we take dialectic in Plato's *Republic* to be, purely and simply, the search for and the knowledge of essences. For, even if we suppose—as we must, if we want to take seriously Plato's twofold characterization—that Plato intends a connection between, on the one hand, the search for and the knowledge of essences and, on the other hand, the liberation and reorientation of the soul, we must confess that it is left unclear from the two characterizations what the connection is. Furthermore, it is not plausible to suppose that the liberation and reorientation of the soul is strictly part of the search for essences.

Why cannot we suppose this? If we did, the problem would be much diminished. For one thing, it is perfectly possible to be committed to the search for essences without thinking that this search includes, implies or has anything to do with the liberation and reorientation of the soul. If, therefore, Plato thinks the two go together, we must seriously wonder why. But even from within Plato here, it does not seem that the liberation and reorientation of the soul is strictly part of the search for essences; the connection between the two characterizations, whatever it is, is not that. Once the released prisoner is released and has turned around, he is very soon faced with *ti esti* questions (see 515d). But this happens only once he is released and has turned around. This shows that the liberation and reorientation of the soul is not, for Plato, strictly part of the search for essences. I want to argue that the liberation and reorientation is part of that which enables the search for essences.

The only way out that I can think of is to recognize that when Plato characterizes dialectic in this twofold way, he does not mean to suggest that we can tell from them that they go together and designate one thing. His point is, rather, that there is a single thing that is behind both, and serves to link them together. What is behind both, and serves to link them together, is a power or ability in us that enables us to undertake this whole journey and any moment and step in it: from the liberation and turning around of the soul to, eventually and all going well, the knowledge of essences and ultimately the Good. Plato thinks that the two descriptions of dialectic designate one thing because they are both manifestations of a single power or ability in us. I attribute this view to Plato, not only because of the crux passages (518b6–d7 and 532a1–d1, discussed earlier), but also because of the way in which he refers to dialectic in what immediately follows, which he does three times through the phrase *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis* (532d8, 533a8, 537d5).

VII

At this point one may naturally find oneself wondering: How informative is it to be told that all this is the product of a single power or ability in us? Is this whole journey (as in the Cave Simile), or indeed the search for essences, or indeed the potential of arriving at the end of this search, or the arrival itself at knowledge, really explained by Plato's telling us that it is the product of a single power or ability in us? Is it explained if we are not told what this ability is and how it works? And what are we told about this ability and how it works?

In regard to this last question (What are we told about this ability and how it works?), we know that, according to Plato's general account of a power or ability (*dunamis*) at *Republic* V. 477c1–d6, to characterize a power or ability is to determine two things: first, *what* objects this power or ability is occupied with; and, secondly, *how* is this power or ability occupied with them. *What* the objects are that this ability, dialectic, is occupied with is not in question, for we know that they are Forms, or, what comes to the same thing, essences, or, what comes to the same thing, what each thing is. What is in question is *how* this ability, dialectic, is occupied with these objects. Is it (OPTION 1) simply by one's knowing them? Or it is (OPTION 2) also by one's searching for the knowledge of them? Or is it (OPTION 3) also by one's orientating oneself—reorientating oneself—so as to be able to search for them?

On the first option, only the philosopher who has achieved some wisdom can count as a dialectician. On the second option, the dialectician includes the philosopher who is searching for wisdom but has none. On the third option, the dialectician includes anyone who has in a certain distinctive way been struck by the thought that the world as we ordinarily view it is shot through with illusion.

It is highly informative and significant to be told that all this—the knowledge of Forms, the search for this knowledge, and the soul's reorientation to reality—is the product of a single power or ability in us, even if nothing further were said about this power or ability and how it works. For it implies that we cannot understand any one moment, stage or step in this journey unless we understand it as a particular part with its particular place in the journey, and that we cannot understand the journey unless we understand it as being made up of these particular moments, stages and steps. This is because, if items A, B, C, D are all equally the effect of and explained by a single underlying item, X, then X does not only cause and explain each of them individually, it also causes them to take place together and explains why they take place together.

Actually, there are a number of implications, and while some of them may be plausible as they stand, others are remarkable, surprising and puzzling. It may be plausible to think that understanding the search for essences requires understanding it as having a certain terminus, which is the knowledge of those essences. But, as the practice of commentators on Plato's epistemology testifies, it has not been found plausible to think that understanding the knowledge of essences requires understanding it as the terminus of the search for essences. Commentators on Plato's epistemology have long been investigating his account of knowledge, including his account of the knowledge of essences and Forms, while having had very much less to say about his account of enquiry and having had nothing to say about how his account of knowledge is related to his account of enquiry.[21] But it is an immediate implication of our hypothesis (i.e. that, for Plato, there is a single ability in us that explains both the search for essences and the terminus of this search) that, for Plato, we cannot understand what the knowledge of essences is or understand what the search for essences is, unless we understand both together and in relation to each other.

But there is an even more remarkable, surprising, and puzzling implication, and this is that, for Plato, the search for essences is inseparably part of a process that involves the soul's liberation and reorientation; and that we cannot understand the search for essences unless we understand this whole journey of the soul and unless we understand the two together and in relation to each other. We must ask why Plato thinks this and how he can defend it.

VIII

Imagine putting this question to a modern essentialist: Do you think that the search for essences by us scientists and philosophers is inseparably part of a process that involves our liberation and reorientation? I suppose she would shrug her shoulders and wonder why anyone would think such a thing. I think this is a sound response; indeed, the response is sound also against Plato, on the supposition that Plato claims a direct

link between the search for essences and the liberation and reorientation of the soul. For there is no direct link between these two things. If Plato is to establish a link between them, it must be an indirect link: there must be a third thing that links them together. I think I know what this third thing is. I shall first set out this by recalling what I have argued elsewhere in regard to Plato's dialogues before the *Phaedo*.[22] I shall then consider whether there is evidence for this in *Republic* VII.

I have argued elsewhere that Plato's commitment to the search for essences is not a self-standing and unmotivated commitment, on the contrary it is motivated by the view that there are certain philosophical questions, problems, *aporiai*, not necessarily involving the *ti esti* question or the search for essences, which, Plato thinks, require that we pose corresponding *ti esti* questions and search for these essences, if we want to answer and resolve the original *aporiai*. Moreover, these *aporiai* require that we pose the *ti esti* question afresh and as if we were in the dark about what the things involved are. I showed (esp. in chapter 8 of Politis 2015) that what is distinctive of those *aporiai* that require that we ask *ti esti* questions in this radical way if we want to resolve the *aporiai*, is that they are (what I call) *radical* aporiai. They are *radical* aporiai in the sense that they cannot be answered by appeal to what we take ourselves already to know, pre-philosophically, about what the things involved are, or by appeal to anything that relies on what we take ourselves already to know about this. The reason why we cannot rely on our pre-philosophical and everyday knowledge of what the things involved are, or anything based on this, is that a radical *aporia* calls into question even our basic pre-philosophical and everyday views about what the things are that we are everyday engaged with: calls into question even our basic concepts and our confidence that we know what we mean by our words and what we intend to signify by them.

Let us suppose that Plato thinks that the search for essences (with which dialectic is identified at 532a1–b2) is motivated by radical *aporiai*. (We shall consider in a moment whether there is textual evidence from *Republic* VII in support of this supposition.) On this supposition, we can see why Plato thinks that the search for essences must be understood as part of a larger journey and a journey of the soul that involves the soul's liberation and reorientation. For if one recognizes a radical *aporia* and acknowledges it as radical, then one will recognize and acknowledge that one cannot rely on those everyday ways of thinking and the basic concepts and elements of thought that people, including oneself previously, never thought of questioning. One will come to think that these everyday ways of thinking, even the most basic among them, may be illusory, and that establishing the extent of the illusion requires nothing less of one than one's taking up, working through and resolving the *aporia* whose radical character showed up the illusion. This is a journey of radical reorientation in one's thinking and oneself.

This shows that while there is no credibility in Plato's claim that the search for essences must be understood as part of the journey of the soul's liberation and reorientation, if it is supposed that this claim is based on the view that there is a direct link between that search and this journey, the claim *is* credible if we suppose that it is based on the view that the search for essences is motivated by a deeper and more original preoccupation, which is the preoccupation with radical *aporiai*.

Is there indication in *Republic* VII that Plato associates the search for essences with the idea of radical *aporiai* and the engagement with radical *aporiai*? The verb *aporein* figures in the Cave Simile (515d6) at an important juncture in which it is directly associated with the *ti esti* question. We are asked to imagine a prisoner who has been liberated and has turned around, and now pressure is put on him by someone to say of each thing that is exhibited to him *what it is* (*kai dē kai hekaston tōn pariontōn deiknus autō[i] anangazoi erōtōn apokrinasthai hoti estin*, 515d4–5). And we are asked to imagine that, now that he has nothing familiar to point to as examples and exemplars—for he has turned away from the familiar everyday things—our hero will not be able to answer any *ti esti* question that is put to him and will on the contrary be at a loss (*aporein*, 515d6) for an answer.

Is this *aporia*, which Plato presents in immediate relation to the *ti esti* question, a radical *aporia*? Plato presents it as such. He presents it as an *aporia* that, first, stands in immediate relation to the *ti esti* question and, secondly, originates in one's having turned one's back on those familiar things by pointing to which one was previously able to answer *ti esti* questions. It is by reference to those familiar things that, previously to one's reorientation, one took oneself to know what one's words mean and designate. This is clear from 515b4–5: 'And if they were able to *dialegesthai* with one another, don't you think they'd suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?' This shows that the *aporia* is presented as radical in the sense of an *aporia* that cannot be answered, either directly or indirectly, by relying on those everyday familiar things that one standardly points to in answering *ti esti* questions; and as an *aporia* whose distinctive character and force is due to the fact that one no longer takes oneself to know even how to begin attempting to answer it.

There are other *aporiai* and *aporiai* that are presented as radical in *Republic* VII. A prominent such *aporia* is presented at the end of the so-called summoner's passage (523a–525a), and it is associated both with a *ti esti* question and with the soul's reorientation. Here it is said that the soul will puzzle over (*aporein*) and will enquire into (*zētein*) and ask itself what oneness itself is (*anerōtan ti pote estin auto to hen*); and that this learning about oneness may be supposed to belong to those things that are capable of raising up the soul and reorientating it toward the vision of reality (*kai houtō tōn agōgōn an eiē kai metastreptikōn epi tēn tou ontos*

thean hē peri to hen mathēsis, 524e5–525a2). It can be shown that this *ti esti* question—'What is oneness?'—is here bound up with the question 'What is it for something, and in the first instance those things that we perceive by the senses, to be *one* thing?'[23]

This question—'What is oneness?'—is presented as articulating a radical *aporia*. This is clear from the fact that Socrates asks Glaucon whether or not it is possible to answer this *ti esti* question by pointing to a thing of which it is evident, and evident to the senses, that is it *one* thing (524d9–525a2) and Glaucon answers that this is not possible: 'because we at the same time see one and the same thing as one and as indeterminate in number' (*hama gar tauton hōs hen te orōmen kai hōs apeira to plēthos*, 525a4–5). A radical *aporia* regarding a particular quality, F, as we have characterized this notion, is an *aporia* that we cannot begin to answer by relying on things of which it is evident that they are examples and exemplars of things that are F; and that we cannot answer in this way because the *aporia* draws even such examples and exemplars into question. This is how, in this passage, Plato characterizes the *aporia* regarding *to hen*.

IX

Let us draw to a conclusion.

We have seen that in the *Republic* Plato characterizes dialectic *both* as the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms *and* as the liberation and reorientation of the soul. I have argued that what binds together these two very different characterizations and ensures that they designate a single thing, is that, as Plato conceives of it in the *Republic*, dialectic is a power and ability in us and this power and ability manifests itself in these two ways.

A hard question has been: Why, for Plato, does the power and ability that is dialectic manifest itself not only in the search for and the knowledge of essences and Forms, but also in the liberation and reorientation of the soul? The answer, I have argued, is that Plato thinks that the soul's liberation and reorientation is part of that which enables the soul to search for essences and Forms.

The question, in turn, is why Plato thinks this. I have argued that he does so because he thinks that, for certain things, X, we are able to properly ask 'What is X?', and so to search for the essence and Form of this thing, X, only if we recognize that there are radical *aporiai* regarding this thing, X. These are apparent contradictions regarding this thing, X, that cannot be answered by appeal to what we take ourselves already to know, pre-philosophically, about what the thing is or by appeal to anything that relies on this. Recognizing such *aporiai* means recognizing that we are in the dark about what something is. This, I have argued, is the darkness distinctive of the chained prisoners in the Cave, who are likened to us

before anyone is liberated and reorientated. It follows that one crucially distinctive mark of a person who has been liberated and reorientated is her recognition of radical *aporiai* and her consequent recognition that she was formerly in the dark about what the things are with which she is faced. This is to recognize, in a certain distinctive way, that the world as we ordinarily view it is shot through with illusion.

For Plato, we may conclude, the recognition of such *aporiai* is part of that which enables the soul to search for essences and Forms. This, we may note, explains his remarkable statement at V.454a, when he says that many people are under the illusion that they are thinking in a good and dialectical way whereas in actual fact they are thinking in a bad and eristic way. This illusion is compatible with one's using words the way a dialectician would: the only way of securing against this is one's viewing (*episkopein*) the subject of one's words in a certain Form-orientated way. We have found that the *episkopein* here may rightly be understood as indicating a way of being orientated towards reality.

We began by remarking that there is not much point in a philosopher's postulating a power and ability that enables us to search for essences and Forms, unless the philosopher thinks that there is a particular difficulty in our taking up such a search and thinks this difficulty is sufficiently major for there to be a real question whether we are even able to engage in this search. We have found that Plato thinks just this. It is hard to imagine something more difficult for us than to recognize that we are in the dark about what things are and that the world as we know it is shot through with illusion. Things are not made easier by being told that what enables this recognition is the recognition of radical *aporiai*. For we can easily imagine a philosopher who insists that there are no *aporiai* that are radical: insists that there is nothing that can reasonably show us that we may not know what we mean by and what we intend to designate by our words.[24] Such a philosopher may, no less than Plato's dialectician, use words suitable for articulating *ti esti* questions (i.e. words of the form "What is …?") and for articulating dilemmas and apparent contradictions (i.e. words of the form "whether … or …") and for dividing things into kinds: for Plato, she will not at all be capable of dialectic, the search for essences and Forms.

Let us imagine putting once again the question to a modern essentialist, but one who has followed our argument about Plato's answer: Do you think that the search for essences by us scientists and philosophers is inseparably part of a process that involves our liberation and reorientation? We may expect a reply such as the following. "While I can now see that, and how, Plato defends an answer in the affirmative, I must urge that this is a long way away from modern essentialism. For it never occurred to us modern essentialists that we are able to search for the essence of a thing, e.g. water, only if we have turned away from the everyday examples and exemplars of e.g. water. On the contrary, we modern

essentialists start with those everyday examples and exemplars of e.g. water and build on them in our search for the essence of e.g. water."

One might think that Plato's pretence (that we are in the dark about what things are; that the world as we know it is shot through with illusion) is unacceptable because we have no way of stepping out of our intellectual skin and inspect our intellectual health from a godlike perspective.[25] But Plato's account of the liberation and reorientation of the soul contains no reference to a need to inspect our intellectual condition from an external point of view. That this is not something we can do or even imagine ourselves doing is a point that he drives home: in *Protagoras* (313a–314c, esp. 314a–b), when he says that whereas we can examine food and drink prior to ingesting it, and so we can assess how healthy or unhealthy it is before allowing it to affect our system, this is not possible in regard to intellectual food, which we cannot examine except by admitting it into our thought and having it affect us. What Plato's account of the journey of the soul away from illusion relies on is the idea of radical *aporiai*, that is, *aporiai* that call into question even our most everyday entrenched examples and exemplars (*paradeigmata*) of what each thing is. Plato enjoins us to be prepared to recognize of an *aporia* that it may indeed be radical and to resist strong pressures to stay true to and build constructively on those everyday acknowledged examples and exemplars of what each thing is. In Plato, the source of the impression of the world as shot through with illusion is not the pretense of some external, godlike point of view, but the recognition of radical tensions within our thinking.

What can we put our trust in to orientate ourselves, after such a radical reorientation? Is there not an overwhelming danger that we will be and remain utterly without a compass—*scombussolati* as colloquial Italian has it? Plato enjoins us to put our trust in the *aporia* as the guide to our thinking in its new orientation and thrust. We will now think in *aporia*-based ways, ways that are thoroughly caught up with the desire to engage with and try to resolve just that *aporia* and just those *aporiai* in which we are caught up. In this new way of thinking we will keep tracing our thought back to the radical *aporiai* that set it off.[26] It is worth noting that a possible outcome of the engagement with a radical *aporia* is the recognition that something about the original everyday examples and exemplars was credible and trustworthy after all. Above all, Plato enjoins us to put our trust in the belief that we each of us have in us a power and ability that will allow us to orientate ourselves in these new and unfamiliar surroundings. This is the power and ability of dialectic.

Notes

1 The passages are cited by Wolfgang Wieland (1999, 297), when he characterizes dialectic as 'eine Fähigkeit'.

2 This hypothesis is consistent with either of two ways of taking the phrase *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis*: (1) Taking *dialegesthai* in the phrase to mean,

not 'dialectic', but 'to engage in (a certain kind of) discussion', and taking the whole phrase *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis* to designate dialectic understood as the ability to engage in a certain kind of discussion. (2) Taking *dialegesthai* in the phrase to mean 'dialectic' and taking the genitive in the phrase to be an identifying genitive: 'the power/ability that is dialectic'. The hypothesis is consistent with the fact that when Plato refers to dialectic, he often refers, not to the power or ability, but to one or another of its manifestations. It is familiar that, in Greek as in English, one and the same word, such as 'knowledge' ('*gnōsis*', '*epistēmē*', '*nous*') or 'vision' ('*opsis*', '*horan*'), can be used both for an ability and for its exercise and manifestations. Confirmation of this double use is found in the Sun Analogy earlier in *Republic* VI (see esp. 507c1–508d10). As for the term *dunamis*, I shall consistently say 'power or ability' or 'power and ability'. Critics commonly translate 'power' (e.g. McCabe 2015, 102: '"power of conversation", *hē tou dialegesthai dunamis*, that will allow us to touch, or to view, the topmost intelligible'), but it is important to keep in mind that *dunamis* comes from *dunatos*, 'able', 'one who is able'. It will be important to think of this power or ability, dialectic, as that in us that *enables* us to do such things as search for essences and Forms and, ultimately and all going well, know them.

3 By 'liberation', I am referring to the prisoner's being released of his chains; and by 'reorientation', to his turning around, away from the shadows and towards the ascent and the eventual exit.

4 A little later (511d1 and d4) *nous* is used, in making the same point, for 'reason'.

5 M. M. McCabe (2015, 101) treats of it insightfully; as does Jens Kristian Larsen (2021) in his analysis of it.

6 See Adam 1902, 285, commenting on *kat' eidē diairoumenoi* at 454a4: '*eidē* is not of course "the Ideas": but "species", "kinds"'. This misses that the people described in this passage believe they are dialecticians, and dialectic will, not so long after 454a, be said to be about Forms (I do not mean Forms in contradistinction to kinds). For this issue, see Larsen 2021, 103.

7 The term used first at 454a5 and picked up immediately after through the phrase *dialektō[i] pros allēlous chrōmenoi*, '… using discussion with each other'.

8 The passage opens with a playful invocation of 'how great is the power of the craft of disputation' (*ē gennaia … hē dunamis tēs antilogias*, 454a1–2); *erizein* is set against *dialegesthai* at a5 and again at a8–9; *antilogia* is picked up again at b2, and proceeding *eristikōs* is picked up again at b5.

9 As Plato carefully spells out in *Sophist* 235c–236c. Notably, he does so in immediate preparation to raising the first major *aporia* in the dialogue.

10 Following the text of manuscripts A and D, and reading *nomizein onomazein* at 515b5. This goes against Burnet, who follows manuscript F and Proclus and has only *nomizein*, and against Slings, who follows Iamblichus and has only *onomazein*. For a defence of this text, see Harte 2007.

11 515b4–5; just quoted. This is indicated by the *ei oun dialegesthai hoioi t' eien pros allēlous* … ('If they were able …'). It is also indicated by the fact that the chained prisoners labour under this twofold and radical illusion in their condition; for, if they were able to engage in dialectic in that condition, they would be able to recognize the illusion for what it is.

12 See 515d (esp. d4–5), when the released prisoner is asked by someone what the things are (*hoti estin*) that he is now seeing, and is forced to answer this question.

13 This is picked up at 527d7–e3.

14 Christopher Rowe (2012, 416, note 465) says of the phrase *technē tēs periagōgēs*: '*a special kind of expertise*: Presumably, dialectic (see, e.g., 511b–c).'
15 See the comment on 454a4 in Adam 1902 (in note 6 above).
16 See Owen 1966, 143 (also in Owen 1986, 214).
17 See *Hippias Major* 286c–289d and *Euthyphro* 5d–6e.
18 See Politis 2021a, Chapter 2 for the view that this is why Plato thinks that the essence/Form of a quality, F, cannot be perceived by the senses: because he thinks that the question 'What is F?' cannot be answered by pointing, or in some other way calling to mind, a particular thing that is F and an exemplar of a thing that is F.
19 I am thinking of Robinson (1953) and the line of interpretation that he inaugurated and that includes Burnyeat (2000), Benson (2006), Sedley (2007, 262) and Reeve (2013). Commenting on 532a–c, Robinson says: 'everything from the first moment of the prisoners' release to the last moment of looking at shadows and reflections outside the cave is mathematics, and everything from the first look at real things outside the cave to seeing the sun is dialectic.' (1953, 196) There are, thankfully, divergent views, not least McCabe (2015, 102), whom I quote in-text. Also Wieland (1999, 297), who says about dialectic in the *Republic*: 'Auch hier handelt es sich um ein Wissen, das sich nicht in seinen Inhalten objektivieren läßt, sondern das als bewußtes Können mit der Person eines Trägers fest verbunden ist.' Casting our glance further afield, it is easy to find critics who think that dialectic is also about the liberation and reorientation of the soul (I am thinking of e.g. Lavecchia 2006 and Cusinato 2014).
20 I discuss this passage in Politis 2021a, Chapter 7.
21 In Politis 2021a, chapter 4, I pose this question in regard to the *Phaedo*: Does Plato think that the account of knowledge is independent of the account of enquiry? I argue that he does not.
22 See esp. Politis 2015; also Politis 2012.
23 See Politis 2021a, Chapter 7.
24 This reminds me of something I experienced thirty-five years ago when a visiting student in Munich: John Searle was giving a distinguished talk and, in response to Quine's claim that we may not know what we intend to designate by a word such as "rabbit" (e.g. whether we intend to designate a whole rabbit or an un-detached rabbit part), banged on the table and said: "When I say 'Rabbit!', I mean rabbit!"
25 This is Martha C. Nussbaum's 1986 critique of Plato.
26 I am reminded of inspiring lines from Paul Feyerabend: '… *one must learn to argue with unexplained terms and to use sentences for which no clear rules of usage are as yet available*. Just as a child who starts using words without yet understanding them, who adds more and more uncomprehended linguistic fragments to his playful activity, discovers the sense-giving principle only *after* he has been active in this way for a long time—the activity being a necessary presupposition of the final blossoming forth of sense' (1975, 194, original emphasis).

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10 Another Platonic Method

Four Genealogical Myths about Human Nature and Their Philosophical Contribution in Plato

Catherine Rowett

I Introduction

"Dialectic" seems to be a term used by characters in Plato's dialogues (usually Socrates, but sometimes another lead character) to describe their approved method of philosophical inquiry, or the proper training for aspiring philosophers.[1] But are there limits to what kind of philosophical work could count as dialectical? Does it include every effective approach that is not sophistical? Or are only some of the effective ways of doing philosophy "dialectic"?

On the latter view, that not all good approaches in Plato are *dialectical* approaches, one tempting contrast might be the distinction between arguments and "myths". Can *telling a story* count as a dialectical method? Some might answer that the myths are not a way of doing philosophy at all, let alone dialectic, but a way of giving up on philosophy, when dialectic runs out.[2] On that conception, myth is a tool when dialectic fails. It is a tool for persuasion, but not a heuristic method, nor a method of proof, nor of analysis or scrutiny. So it is not a method of dialectic.

Here I challenge that view. Examining four cases where Plato's characters tell stories of a particular kind (the "genealogy" kind) I shall show that these myths serve as a heuristic tool, a method of scrutiny, and, when successful, they constitute a kind of proof. Plato uses them, I shall suggest, across many dialogues of all periods, from the Socratic to the most Platonic or critical. He puts them in the mouth of various characters. Are they part of dialectic or an alternative to dialectic? That seems to me largely a question of terminology. As we shall see, they are a philosophical method, deployed in all seriousness by Plato, to good effect, in his most famous enquiries.

II Genealogy as a Recommended Method in Early Modern and Recent Philosophy

Imaginary narratives are familiar in modern philosophy: they are one of the recognised ways of undertaking a philosophical enquiry, particularly

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in relation to human social values, politics, and ethics. In these fields it is quite common to offer a genealogy or a state-of-nature narrative, which tells a story about the development of human society and its institutions, beginning from a so-called "original condition"—a state of nature or primitive condition, prior to the development of the institutions that are the subject of the enquiry. By way of telling a story of how the institutions came to be as they now are, and why it is natural that they would have turned out this way (or, if it is not natural, what other predictable turns of events might have brought it about), the philosopher provides explanations and/or evaluations of the practices.

Famous examples of this way of proceeding can be found in (for instance) Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, David Hume's *Treatise*,[3] Friedrich Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* and John Rawls' *A theory of justice*. More recently, Bernard Williams deploys it, with extensive discussion of how it works, in *Truth and Truthfulness* (Williams 2002).[4] Philosophers who use this method are generally seeking to evaluate or defend some conventions, institutions, or preferences that are crucial for human society. Often they use it to diagnose which aspects of community life and morality are due to nature, and which aspects are instilled by training, legal enforcement, or even supernatural forces. The philosopher provides a *plausible story* that makes sense of how things came to be as they are. The method can also be used to scrutinise or criticise: to show that no plausible tale can be told, without invoking some unlikely intervention or additional causation besides raw human nature.[5] In essence, the method assumes that telling a "likely story", with no explanatory gaps, about how the status quo would be the predictable outcome if x and y are true, adds credibility to the philosopher's claim that x and y are indeed true, and are the correct explanation of the status quo.

My claim here is that this method is not at all new, but is one of Plato's habitual methods of enquiry and analysis. We can readily recognise it from the discussion in the *Timaeus* of natural science done as a "likely story".[6] Plato may not have been the first to deploy this method,[7] but he certainly used it widely. In other papers, I have discussed his use of this method in the *Republic*, where Socrates' imagines the origin of a primitive society, as a heuristic tool for investigating the origin and value of justice, and the conditions required for establishing justice in a community (Rowett Forthcoming-a; Rowett Forthcoming-b). Here, I turn to four dialogues in which characters *other than Socrates* deliver genealogical stories, and do so, as I shall argue, not as a diversion from the dialectical enquiry that Plato is undertaking, but as their contribution to the dialectic. Although these stories are attributed to other characters, they are not trivial entertainment. Plato is using them to provide an argument, to present one or more sides of the dialectical debate; they contribute philosophical work; they are *by Plato*; they deliver insights or propose explanations. They offer hypotheses for investigation.

Like the early-modern examples, the examples of genealogical narratives in Plato that I shall be exploring are all contributions to philosophical anthropology: the task of discerning or explaining what human nature is like, identifying which human capacities are natural, or artificial, and making sense of human behaviour and preferences. As we shall see, genealogy myths are perfect for exploring the boundaries between nature and nurture, and for investigating which aspects of human behaviour plausibly belong to our pre-social, pre-cultural dispositions, and which depend on socialisation, or the influence of political and civic institutions.

For the remainder of this chapter I shall present my chosen case studies, and focus on identifying salient points in the narrative, considering, in each case, what the speaker is trying to prove by means of his narrative.

III Protagoras: His Great Speech

In Plato's *Protagoras*, Socrates challenges Protagoras about his visit to Athens as a teacher of political *technē* (318a). This makes no sense in Athens, Socrates suggests, since the democracy does not recognise political expertise but regards all citizens as competent at political decisions. No professional expertise is required for participation in the assembly, so the democratic ideology suggests that political judgement is not taught but natural, and equally distributed (319d).

Protagoras responds with a story (320c–322d). His task is to discern whether political expertise is a natural, innate ability, whether it is universal and evenly distributed, and whether it develops unaided, without specialist training. This is one of those questions about the boundaries between nature and nurture, and about which aspects of human behaviour depend on an upbringing among political and civic institutions, for which genealogy seems to work especially well. Protagoras' myth presents a kind of thought-experiment. First it imagines what things would be like if human beings lacked the capacity for social engagement—a situation which, hypothetically, occurs at the dawn of time. It envisages that the effect would be imminent extinction for the human race. So political skill is a survival factor, and Protagoras suggests that it has to be universally distributed to be effective: a functioning society depends on expecting *everyone* to be socially integrated, and on penalising, excluding, or otherwise controlling any who refuse to co-operate. Since no society can survive without these conditions, the fact that successful societies exist shows that somehow people are no longer like those imagined early humans who lacked all social skills. Further, Protagoras will argue (323c–324d), while some basic moral sense is innate in all human beings nowadays (thanks to a gift from Zeus), it *also* needs to be nurtured by education.

The first part of this argument is a myth: its mechanisms are the actions of incompetent divinities who mess up their work, steal fire from the

gods, fail to prevent their creatures from dying out, and all sorts: an absurd picture that is entertaining, but might not, at first glance, seem like an argument, or a contribution to a dialectical discussion. Yet that is what it is, I submit. Let us take a closer look.

The story begins with the creation of animals (including human beings) and the distribution of natural endowments for the various species. Some animals get horns, claws, or woolly coats, but humans are left with nothing, because of the incompetent distribution overseen by Epimetheus:

T1: But since Epimetheus wasn't terribly clever, he failed to take account of the fact that he'd used up all the endowments on the non-rational animals; but he'd still got the human race left, devoid of any adornment. As he was puzzling over how to deal with this problem, Prometheus turned up to inspect the distribution, and saw that the other animals were all nicely equipped with everything, but humanity was naked, barefoot, with no bed and no weapons. But the day on which they must be sent out into the light was already upon them. At his wits end as to what protection he could possibly find for humanity, Prometheus stole from Hephaestus and Athena the technical wisdom that works along with fire, and gave that to the human race. This skill alone is useless without fire, nor indeed can one acquire it without that. So in this way humanity got the practical intelligence for living. But man still lacked any political intelligence. That was something that only Zeus could access.

Protagoras 321b6–d5.[8]

Protagoras then considers what could solve the problem. It is not enough to have food and fire:

T2: Thus equipped, people originally lived one here, one there. There were no cities. But they were being killed by wild beasts, due to being inferior to the beasts in every respect, and though their hunting abilities were adequate for getting food, they were not up to the fight against predators. This was because they lacked the art of warfare, which is one of the components of the political art. And though they tried to get together and protect themselves by founding cities, their lack of political skills meant that they kept wronging each other, with the result that they parted from each other again. Once again they were being wiped out.

Protagoras 322a8–b8

Thomas Hobbes imagined a similar situation in his account of the state of nature, in the absence of any contractual political order in *Leviathan* Part 1, Chapter 13. But the story does not end there: as with all such genealogy and state of nature enquiries, the point is to discover an adequate

explanation for how we could have got from there to here. If we lack natural strength or weapons to resist the predator beasts, and must club together to save each other, how exactly did clubbing together and organising political communities get started?

Protagoras's story claims that no such collaboration would develop naturally, given the innate resources of the original human race. Nor does it stem from the basics of culture such as religion, the use of tools, fire, or cookery. Something else was needed, and it was eventually, in the nick of time, given by Zeus:

T3: Zeus, then, fearing for our race, lest it be completely lost, sent Hermes to bring shame and justice to human beings, so that there could be political organisations and collective bonds of collaboration.
Protagoras 322c1–3

Here Zeus instils a moral sensitivity which was missing from human nature as created by Epimetheus. The implication is that the ability to evaluate things in moral terms (evaluating them for justice or shamefulness) is not shared by non-human animals, but also not strictly *human*, but is a divine gift that overcomes a shortfall in human nature.

Protagoras uses his myth to provide a subtle answer to Socrates' original question, about whether political judgement requires a training with sophists. For, according to Protagoras' story, moral and political competence is a supernatural gift, not a natural endowment, but is, nevertheless, almost universal, and society rightly regards anyone who lacks it as defective (322d4–5).[9] Thus far, the story supports democratic ideology, since this universal sense of shame and justice is what ensures that all have the capacity to participate in political assemblies, trial by jury etc.

Protagoras then proceeds to complicate that picture, and to do that he abandons the storytelling mode and adopts a form of argument that appeals to the listeners' experience of how society actually works (323a–324c). Using this evidence he suggests that, as things stand, both nature and nurture contribute to mature political abilities. We might ask why he stops using story and turns to *logos* at this point, and I would suggest that the reason is that he is asking the audience to consider not a distant past when human life was very different from now (as in the myth of primitive man) but the current way in which society works, for which the appropriate evidential support comes from current experience. Protagoras appeals to our understanding of how people currently behave in order to support his claim that in the final situation (i.e. once the narrative is complete) people do educate their children (323c–324c). Overall the speech, both the narrative and the exposition of the current condition, presents and defends a complex account of why moral excellence is not hereditary, nor equally distributed, and how it can be enhanced with training.[10] The claims are about biology, anthropology, and sociology, but

the proof, for the first part of the thesis, concerning the development of the basic sense of justice in primitive man, is a fictional story about an unspecified distant past time.

The most famous modern examples of genealogy could tempt us to the idea that the method always aims for "naturalistic" explanations, where "naturalism" is generally a term of approval in contemporary philosophy. I have argued elsewhere that Protagoras offers, by contrast, a *non-naturalistic* genealogical account (since he invokes divine intervention at a crucial point when nature fails).[11] However, the net effect, once the deficiency has been rectified by divine dispensation, is pretty similar. The political abilities (though divine in origin) become a universal innate capacity.

IV The Athenian Stranger on the Origin of Political Community in Plato's *Laws* III

Plato's *Laws* dramatises a conversation that supposedly takes place in Crete. The main speaker is a visitor from Athens. The discussion is prompted by the fact that practices and values vary between one polis and another. Indeed, the first two books feature an extended discussion of the value of alcoholic drinks and sympotic events and of the role of music and choral dancing in socialising the young, with ethnographic cross-cultural comparisons.

Roughly halfway through *Laws* II it becomes apparent that the Athenian is "founding" a new civic community in his imagination, which will embody his preferred laws and practices—the ones that emerge in their discussion in rather the same way as in the foundation of the "city created in words" (*R.* 592a9–10) by Socrates and his companions, in the *Republic*. At *Laws* 660c2–6 the Athenian explains that he is not just describing what currently happens in various places, but rather *prescribing* what he *wants* to happen, in respect of music and culture. By 664b3–d4 he is saying that there "will be three choirs", that the "boys' choir, dedicated to the Muses, will enter first" and so on. By this stage, the genre is clearly utopian planning.

The third book, however, does not continue directly with the utopian planning, but starts in a different genre (676a1). The Athenian casts his gaze back to the dawn of time, and considers how *poleis* come to be formed. His aim is to find an explanation of how it happens that different cities have different traditions, by considering how they come to be formed to start with. This, I submit, is Plato once again having his character engage in genealogical explanation, this time to reconstruct what is essential or common to all communities, and what is variable, and why.

First (677a) the Athenian invokes the tradition of deluge myths: stories of a huge flood that wipes out all existing cities, leaving a post-apocalyptic remnant of humanity to begin the process of city-formation afresh. There are interesting connections here with the tale of Atlantis recited by Critias,

partly in the *Timaeus* and partly in the *Critias*, where the flood story is tied to reflections on good and bad constitutions. Here in the *Laws*, the Athenian uses one of these periodic near-extinction events as the beginning of his genealogy story about the origin of a *polis* community. The survivors of the imagined flood are a few isolated shepherds who dwelt in the mountains with flocks of sheep. They have absolutely no experience of city life or political organisation. All the cities are destroyed and their inhabitants gone. All tools and equipment are destroyed (677c). All science is lost (677c). Knowledge of how to make iron and other metals is gone, as also are the means of travel and navigation, and political science (678c5–d6). It is a post-apocalyptic setting which provides a completely clean slate, the "original condition", for a genealogy tale about the foundation of a political community (678a3–9).

On the positive side, the sparse surviving population has plentiful milk, meat, and other basics, and there is no aggressive competition or warfare. Indeed, their loneliness tends to make them seek each other's company in friendship. A natural and simple honesty characterises their dealings. There is no rich/poor divide (678e9–679c8). Their condition is quite unlike that of the violent and anti-social beings at the start of Protagoras's myth.

Little by little, from that starting point, new political orders must have developed, argues the Athenian. The point of the enquiry is to work out at what stage, as they progressed from that simple condition towards developed states with legal systems, the community began to need laws and constitutions, and how a legislature developed (679e6–680a1). The Athenian answers this question by means of a narrative. The most primitive system was a patriarchal collective of distinct households, with the head of each household making decisions, no sovereign above the level of households, and patriarchal authority passed down by inheritance. He calls this system "dynasty" (δυναστεία) (680b2). A classic example, he suggests, is Homer's Cyclops—although he also claims that the system still exists in Greek and non-Greek parts of the world. At this early stage there is no common legislation and no legislative body or law-enforcement provisions across communities or between households.

At the next stage we imagine that the people turn to agriculture, form larger village communities, and build walls round the settlement to protect it from marauding beasts in the forests outside. Since the households come with different customs and rules, established by the elders in the previous dynasty structure, they now need to reach some agreements on which customs and rules should be adopted for the whole community. A mechanism has to emerge, with households sending representatives (their "kings") to an assembly to draw up an agreed code for the settlement. This turns the chiefs and elders into an "aristocracy" (or potentially a kingdom) (681d3–4), and the chiefs who have this office are called "legislators" (681d2).

At this point the Athenian starts to meld the speculative story with existing poetic tales (as in the mention of the Cyclops above). In the third stage, the emerging collective evolves into some form of "*politeia*", of which there are many types. Troy, as described by Homer, is one such outfit, the Athenian suggests, but we can see that there were already a range of different city-structures in place by this stage, since Troy was besieged by an expedition gathered from a whole range of different *poleis* that already existed in those days (682c6). Troy, as described in Homer (*Iliad* XX 216–7), must have been (the Athenian deduces) a city founded many centuries after the deluge, since no one would be so foolish as to build a city on a plain, where multiple rivers converge, while the memory of the need to take refuge on high ground was still fresh (682b7–c5).

In calling upon evidence from Homer, and quoting Homer's description of ancient Ilion, the Athenian remarks that poets are divinely inspired, and that their poetic compositions happen upon historical truth in this, as in many other matters (682a3–5). We can read this as a hint concerning the status of the Athenian's own practice of storytelling. The genealogy-type narrative is both creative and true, both an imaginary reconstruction and a tool for learning facts about the origins of certain human practices. The positive attitude that the speaker takes towards poetry and the epic narrative here, his claim that such poetry is a source of truth, and its poets divinely inspired, is compatible with his fundamentally generous and warm attitude towards music, poetry, and choral performance, and the insistence that choral recitation is crucial in the formation of citizens.[12]

As the Athenian continues his narrative, he notes a change of mode, from description of quasi-mythical cities that feature in poetry but are unavailable for anthropological study, to polities with a continuous history to his own day, and a still living tradition of telling historical foundation myths (682e5, 683e10–684a1). He turns to considering the foundation of Sparta and the formation of the Dorian league—an alliance between Sparta, Argos, and Messene (683a8). This fourth stage in the evolution of political organisations yields what the Athenian calls an *ethnos* (683a8). Politically, it is something like a federation of cities, and the Athenian proceeds to analyse the historical reasons for its failure in practice.

At this point I shall leave the Athenian's narrative, since the part consisting of a myth about prehistory is complete at this point and, as in the *Protagoras*, the description of more recent and current historical conditions takes a more empirical format. But before leaving it, we should first consider what the developmental narrative is for. It is there to underpin what follows, which is the utopian construction of the perfect Magnesia, the task to which the participants turn at 702e, and which continues from the start of Book IV. As in the *Republic* Plato's new imaginary foundation (here built by the Athenian, in collaboration with his Spartan and Cretan

colleagues, Megillus and Clinias) is based upon the understanding drawn from that imaginary, fictional, and quasi-historical, narrative about the evolution of political communities from an imagined apolitical starting condition. The story is comparable to Protagoras' myth, both in its interest in the combination of natural and environmental factors required for a community to emerge and survive, and in its conclusions about human nature, and about the relation between nature and nurture in forming the successful political community.

V The Cosmic Order Explained in the Myth in the Statesman

A third example, also from a dialogue with an explicitly political focus, is the famous myth told by the Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Statesman*. The *Statesman* is an enquiry into the ideal political sovereign. Politically, it is interesting for its condemnation of mechanistic legalistic rule-governed management, which emerges in the later parts of the discussion, but my focus here is on an interlude that occurs quite early on, in the part of the dialogue where the Eleatic Stranger has been leading his young interlocutor (Young Socrates) through a number of "divisions" designed to mark off the real statesman from rivals who might look like statesmen but are really pseudo-statesmen.

Eleven pages into this part of the dialogue, after classifying various kinds of herdsmen (to discover which kind of herding is done by true statesmen), the Eleatic Stranger breaks off and suggests that they should begin again (268d), on a different route from a different starting point, because the process of division has gone awry. Before continuing, the Stranger decides to tell a story:

T4 STRANGER: Well we have to start afresh from a different starting point and set out by a different road.

YOUNG SOC: What other road?

STRANGER: Mixing in a little entertainment, maybe. We need to make use of a substantial section of a great story, and then, for the rest, we have to continue as we did before, constantly slicing off part from part, until we reach the peak that we are looking for, isn't that so?

YOUNG SOC: Definitely!

STRANGER: But turn your attention closely to my story, like children do. You're not that far past childhood anyway.

YOUNG SOC: Go ahead with the tale.

Statesman 268d5–e6

To rectify the mistake, what needs to be done, the Stranger suggests, is to tell a story. This will help them to diagnose the error and avoid making the same mistake again. What interests me is this use of storytelling, as

a way to solve a difficulty in the method of division that they had been trying to use. I shall not address the question why or how the division went wrong,[13] but I shall consider why telling a story is supposed to put the problem right.[14]

The story runs from 268e to 274e, a span of six Stephanus pages, out of a dialogue of 54 pages. This is not by any means the main body of the text, but it has a curious role to play in making the rest of the dialogue a success, apparently.[15] Here too our myth is deployed by a character other than Socrates, though—as in the *Laws*—the narrator is the lead character in this dialogue. Once again, the myth serves an enquiry in political philosophy.

Although (in T4) the Stranger suggests that the myth is "entertainment", and requires an attitude like that of a child, it clearly does more than just entertain. But what is it for? Let us start by examining the story, and then the Stranger's comments at the beginning and the end about what it shows.

The story combines several very familiar motifs. To start with, it reminds us of the *Timaeus* myth, in which the Demiurge makes and sets in motion a universe which is unable to achieve eternal being or eternal motion (269c–270a). But here the rotation of the universe is not (as in the *Timaeus*) integral to the cosmos, consistent, and unending; rather, it oscillates because the cosmos has its own natural tendency to reverse motion, which needs to be counteracted by the positive motion applied by the God or *daimon*. The world oscillates between these two kinds of spin, winding up one way, under the influence of the God, and then unwinding in reverse by the force of its own inherent tendency, as if it were a clockwork spring that is naturally inclined to unwind.[16] When the God lets go, the mechanism springs into reverse, and the creation unwinds towards a worse and worse condition, tending towards its natural innate chaos as the good influence of the divine creator and helmsman fades. At a certain point, when things are becoming severely unwound, the God steps in, takes the helm and starts to rewind it again.

This oscillation between a period tending towards order and a period tending towards disorder is powerfully reminiscent of the oscillation between love and strife in Empedocles,[17] but the Stranger insists that we do not need two rival gods to explain the alternation (270a1). The decline into strife is sufficiently explained by the withdrawal of the good influence that had led to goodness and unity. No malign deity ever takes charge of the world. The world itself naturally inclines towards division and chaos because of the chaotic material of which it is made (273b4–7). It is an unavoidable liability, not a result of evil intent. This is the key theological point. And the key sociological point is that in the period when the God ensured that everything was going well, people lived easy and happy lives, with unlimited leisure time for conversation, but for all that, they lacked any incentive to engage in the search for wisdom (272b–d).

Thirdly, this myth includes an autochthony motif (271a; as does, for instance, the "Noble Fiction" story in the *Republic*).[18] In the period that is the reverse of the current one (a golden age, called the era of Cronus; 269a7, 271c4, 272b2, 272b8), everything goes from old to young instead of from young to old. All the processes are backwards. So whereas nowadays we are buried at the end of life, people in the reverse period emerge out of the earth (from the place where they were buried in the preceding era), live their life backwards, and disappear into a mere dot and nothingness at the end (271a–c). The legends of "earthborn races" are, the Stranger suggests, legends about that other era, during which new lives begin not by sexual reproduction but by resurrection of the old from the grave, whereas in our era sexual reproduction is normal, people start their lives young and grow older, and there are no earthborn generations.[19]

In this and other respects, the myth in the *Statesman* imagines an alternation between what seems normal now and an inverted world in which everything runs backwards, and it envisages a period of extremely bumpy disruption at either end when things change direction. We now live in the period with no god at the helm, and this is the period that includes the story that Protagoras told in the myth we examined above.[20] Many commentators call this the "era of Zeus", but since the Stranger suggests, at 272e6–273a1, that *none of the gods* retains any control during this period, and he seems, I think, to dissent (at 272b2) from the convention of ascribing this period to Zeus, let us call it the "unravelling".

The part that describes the unravelling is the one that matches our other two myths. It alone includes the development of political structures. The cataclysmic "change of direction" at the end of the era of Cronus replaces what was a flood in the *Laws*, or the initial creation of animal species in the *Protagoras*. It might be tempting to suppose that this unravelling period is the relevant part for the search for the perfect statesman, since only in the unravelling are there any statesmen; but in fact the relevance, as we shall discover, lies in the *other*, apolitical, period (under Cronus), in which the role of the perfect statesman is taken by the divine helmsman and there are no legislative roles for human beings (272d4).

Nevertheless, let us start by comparing like with like. The unravelling period is first sketched in outline, from 272d to 273d: the world starts in its best condition, at the point when the God lets go, and it then descends increasingly into disorder as it loses the divine influence. Eventually, it becomes so disordered (273d4–e4) that the God needs to step in and take control again. Secondly, the Stranger provides a more detailed account of its history, beginning at 273e4: first, he explains that lives are lived in the opposite direction, so that the existing living organisms stop getting younger and start to grow older, die and return to the earth from which they had arisen; second, he mentions the need for a new system of conception, birth and infant feeding, to deliver the new creatures that are to live from birth to death instead of the reverse and can no longer be delivered

from the earth itself (273e6–274b1). Then, turning to the history of mankind, the Stranger pictures primitive man at a loss and unable to cope against the wild beasts, as in the story told in the *Protagoras*.[21] They lack tools and skills (as in the early days after the flood in the *Laws*).[22] They have no agricultural skills because they had never needed to do any farming during the reign of Cronus, which was a kind of garden of Eden (274c4). The myth pictures an "original condition" very similar to that of most of these genealogical myths, despite the fact that this is not at the dawn of creation but the beginning of each unravelling period, which will repeatedly occur at every iteration of the oscillation between ravelling and unravelling. This, too, is like the myth in the *Laws*, which envisages periodic deluge situations, regularly returning us to square one.

In the *Statesman* myth, as in the *Protagoras*, the next stage in the development of society is the usual gifts from the gods: the provision of fire (by Prometheus), technical arts (by Hephaestus and Athena), and the cultivation of plants (by unspecified other gods; 274c–d).[23] Thus far the myth tracks the one in the *Protagoras*, so we might then expect the Stranger to point out that the human beings needed to develop the art of politics and learn to set up communities… and this is how it happened… But in fact this part of the story is missing.

The emergence of politics in each unravelling era is simply not explained at all in the myth. Indeed the lacuna is rather peculiar once you look for it:

T5 STRANGER: And all the things that contributed to establishing human life arose out of these things (sc. the three provisions just mentioned, of fire, *techne*, and horticulture), given that the ending of the previous period, of which we just spoke, with provisions from the gods, had left men bereft of care, and they had to provide for their own care and organisation from their own resources—as did the whole cosmos. For we too live and grow now this way, now that way, for ever and ever, always going hand in hand with the cosmos and doing what the cosmos does along with it. And there let our story end…

Statesman 274d2–e1

In other words, the story extends to the provisions that, in Protagoras' myth, were said to be insufficient, but nothing further is explained. The gods simply leave the primitive human beings to get on with it, and that is what they have to do, without any divine assistance. Furthermore, the Stranger says nothing more about how they fare, nor in what way the functions of a viable state could have come into being. There is, in fact, *no genealogy* of political institutions and morality as there is in all the other genealogies in moral and political philosophy, both ancient and modern.[24] After stopping abruptly, the Stranger draws his conclusion, that the role they had identified and defined, in their division of herdsmen (before the

myth), was wrongly focused, because so far from defining (as it should have done) the human politician of our current era (i.e. of the unravelling) it had erroneously located only the superb perfect divine oversight that existed in the other half of the cycle—a divine oversight which presided over a paradise, with every possible convenience provided. That divine sovereign is precisely what is *absent* during the unravelling. It is replaced (if at all) by human political leaders. But the human sovereign does not operate as the divine did, when everything was divinely supplied, and agriculture and the arts were unnecessary. Since our world is a very different place, it requires the collaboration of many professionals and craftsmen, and now the Eleatic Stranger and Young Socrates must identify the exact role of the statesman, as distinct from others in that community of professionals.

However, the Stranger does not use the myth to find the answer, and he does not even offer any genealogy of the development of politics. Perhaps he could have reached an answer in that way if he had continued the myth. But instead he returns to the method of division. In fact, this dialogue, unlike the *Protagoras, Republic*, and *Laws*, seems determined to do its political theory by a (suitably corrected and directed) method of division, not by genealogy. For a moment it looked as if the myth would do the work, but in reality it was there only to correct a false answer and explain what mistake had led us there. The Eleatic tells the story to get a diagnosis of the problem (one of many problems) that had led the dialectic astray. Like the *Sophist*, this dialogue illustrates many failures of the method of division. Division and collection itself seems to be poor at diagnosing or correcting the errors to which it is prone, or (if they are not errors) removing the multiplicity of successful outcomes that a process of division can deliver at the end of a quest. Here, genealogy comes to the rescue.

This myth does not end up constructing a functional city, as in the *Republic* or the *Laws*. But like them, it does take the inquiry in a naturalistic direction, by insisting that politics relates to our fallen, unravelled, world, run by human beings, not to an unreal world where difficulties and economic hardship are unknown. The myth brings us "down to earth" in a sense. It grounds the enquiry in the conditions we face today.

VI Aristophanes and the Spherical Human Wholes in Plato's *Symposium*

All the three myths examined so far (as well as the similar tale told in the *Republic*) offer contributions recognisable as political philosophy and meta-ethics. They reflect on the nature and origin of political and moral institutions and values. They ask whether these institutions and virtues are innate, natural, universal, permanent, a feature of the post-apocalyptic world and so on.

My fourth example, the speech by the comic poet Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*, looks somewhat different. The idea that this myth could count as a contribution to political philosophy or ethics, in the tradition of Hobbes and Nietzsche, might seem surprising. It is party entertainment. The topic (ostensibly) is erotic love.

However, our other examples reveal that stories about what the gods did to some mythical primitive human beings often—or always—turn out to be philosophical contributions in politics, ethics, and philosophical anthropology. Let us therefore read Aristophanes' tale in the same way.

First, Aristophanes explains his aim, which is to show how important Eros (the god of love) is. As things stand, his true significance is overlooked, he suggests (189c). In other words, he intends to show that human nature cannot be explained without understanding the role of the erotic in our practices and pursuits. Our values and aspirations should be seen as expressions of a permanently unsatisfied erotic need.

To demonstrate this, Aristophanes tells a story. He starts from primitive man and considers how things developed from there to here. But instead of stripping away current social and political circumstances, to infer the "original pre-social condition", as the other stories did, Aristophanes posits a radically different original condition, in which primitive man seems almost unrecognisable compared with what we now are: almost a different species—except that we come to recognise, as the narrative proceeds, that it *is us*, and that it describes a lost golden age to which we all long to return.

T6: First of all you need to understand human nature and its afflictions. For our nature in olden times was not like it is now, but quite different. Firstly there were not two kinds of human beings, as now, male and female, but there were three: there was also a third kind that was a cross between both male and female. The name of this kind still survives ("androgyne") but the thing itself is obsolete. Then, however, there was this thing, in form as well as name, that was literally a cross between male and female. Now the term just exists as a term of abuse.

Secondly, the entire shape of all these human beings was round: they were circular and symmetrical at the chest and back, and they had four hands, four legs to match, and two faces on a circular neck, entirely symmetrical back and front. There was just one head with the two faces on opposite sides. And four ears, two lots of genitals, and all the rest, as you'd expect, on this basis. They walked upright, as we do, but in either direction as they wished, and when they wanted to run fast, they stuck all their four legs out and bowled themselves along like acrobats doing cartwheels. Since they had eight limbs to do it with, they went along very fast in a circle.

Symposium 189d–190a

Here Aristophanes is trying to explain how it can be natural—an innate feature of human nature—to aspire to something that is actually physically and practically impossible to achieve, due to the limitations of our nature. It is often said (usually as a criticism) that Plato's ethics and epistemology assume unrealistic standards and goals—out of reach for human nature—as though ethics only makes sense if the goals are achievable by those for whom they are set: as though low-achievers can never aspire to goals achievable only by high achievers, and humans can never strive for goals that are fully realisable only for angels or gods. Much modern philosophy that prides itself on being "naturalistic" makes this assumption, supporting it with the unexamined claim that "ought implies can", as though that formula could be used to prove itself, rather than itself standing in need of proof. Thus we arrive at the modern orthodoxy that Platonic ideals, to which most humans can only aspire but never achieve, are somehow wrongly conceived.

Aristophanes' story helps us to see what is wrong with this modern orthodoxy. In his thought-experiment, our unspoiled original nature was once such that the ideal (for which we still strive) was easily achieved—indeed was our inalienable condition. Once upon a time we were whole and wholly united with the other. So that wholeness (to which we now vainly aspire) was and is, in effect, our *natural* condition, and the only condition in which we could be truly happy. Our current miserable lack of wholeness is an *unnatural* condition—which is why it makes us miserable—despite it being the way we are born and live. The story explains that our inability to achieve the perfection to which we aspire is, despite being universal, nonetheless *contrary to nature*: it is an artificial intervention, a divine intervention, effected by Zeus, specifically to prevent us from enjoying that natural unity and sphericity that was and is our comfortable, natural way of being.

T7: So Zeus and the other gods took counsel about what they might do and were flummoxed. For they couldn't kill them, as they'd previously killed the giants, using thunderbolts to wipe out the whole race, because that would have put an end to the honours and sacrifices that they got from human beings. But they couldn't allow them to go on getting so uppity. After wracking his brains for an idea, Zeus spoke thus: "I think I have a scheme," he said, "whereby humans would become weaker and stop this disgraceful behaviour. What I shall do now is cut each of them in half, as a result of which they will both become weaker in themselves and simultaneously also more useful to us because they will have become more numerous. And they will walk upright on two legs. But if they still seem to be too uppity and don't want to settle down, I'll cut them in two again so that they go on one leg, hopping." And having said that, he cut the people in half, like people who slice vegetables for pickling, or cut eggs in half with a wire…
Symposium 190c1–e2

T8: So when each nature had been split in two, they yearned, each to find their other half. Throwing their arms round each other, entwining themselves together and trying to grow together again, they died of hunger and generally of failing to do anything, because they wanted to do nothing separately from each other. And whenever one of the halves died, and the other was left, the one left behind sought out another and entwined itself with that (whether it found the half of what had been a complete woman, which we call a woman, or the half of what had been a man). And thus they kept on dying…

Symposium 191a5–b5

If we compare this myth with that of Protagoras we can see a common pattern. The original "natural" condition of primitive man differed from what we find now, even though the current "nature" is universal and innate. What transformed us to the way we are now was divine intervention (in Protagoras, a gift of the sense of shame and fairness to enable collaboration, and in Aristophanes the opposite, a divine curtailment of human capacities, to prevent us from enjoying togetherness and to make us needy and inadequate). In Aristophanes' myth, the neediness of our current condition explains the power of the erotic, structuring our striving for a happiness that always eludes us. It explains why we set our hearts on things that seem physically and emotionally impossible, such as being inseparable from the one we love.

These motifs create a surprisingly Platonic background for the later passage where Socrates relays the teaching of "Diotima". Her image of the human condition is similar. The desire always to be with the beloved is now subverted by Diotima into a desire to gaze in perpetuity upon an other-worldly beauty. But the model of striving for something beyond what human nature can currently possess, is Platonic, and was there already in the anthropology developed by Aristophanes.

Aristophanes' picture is Platonic in essence: it captures the idea that we can only understand human nature once we recognise its orientation towards unachievable goals, and its permanent state of erotic desire for things beyond its reach. This is, I submit, surely a familiar part of how we understand ourselves, but recognising that aspect of human nature becomes impossible for those philosophers who dogmatically deny that human goals and aspirations can coherently include things beyond reach. Aristophanes provides a story to explain how such unachievable goals could be intrinsic to what we are, as erotic beings with ambitions beyond our current abilities. The model can be applied to all kinds of aspirations, not just personal relationships. There are many areas, including the political, in which our aspirations are never satisfied by achieving what is realistically achievable under the imperfect conditions that prevail in real life. We always end up with what is practically possible, but that is never the ideal for which we strive. It is never more than an approximation to

something that would have been better, could we have had it. That better, but unattainable, situation is the standard against which we judge our success. To be satisfied with what is less than perfect would be wrong; to congratulate ourselves on getting the best that is achievable is fine. But we should never deny that it falls short of what we have in mind as the target.

In this way, an investigation that starts from human nature and situates the human in its current context can use this kind of narrative to explain how it makes sense that human beings yearn to overcome the constraints of practicality and failure that bedevil attempts to improve things, and how we can rationally always strive for something that exceeds existing levels of attainment. Of course, Aristophanes does not end the story at the point where the humans are dying out. His story continues until we can see ourselves there, as beings for whom the love for one another and the search for a soul-mate is one hugely important drive—part of what it is to be human and incomplete, but not so all-consuming that we are unable to get on with the rest of our aspirations (191b5–c9).

Before leaving the *Symposium* I shall draw some reflections together. In modern philosophy, genealogical enquiry tends to focus on value(s) that seem crucial to the survival of the human race: practices that facilitate collaborative behaviour, or serve a utilitarian purpose in society. Moral values, respect for justice or truthfulness, social and political virtues, all seem susceptible to genealogical explanation. Such enquiries seem to assume that our moral and political institutions are oriented towards survival, protection, and maintenance of good order. They give no account of things that we do because they are beautiful and good but which contribute nothing towards survival or good order.

Aristophanes, by contrast, focuses on aspects of human nature that are almost destructive in their lack of utility and their devotion to something that has personal and aesthetic value but is counter-productive for survival, such as the desire to keep company with the beloved, regardless of all practical considerations. This picture of human nature surely captures more of what motivates us to great achievements than does the pragmatic focus of the other narratives.

Although many of the most famous modern examples of genealogical narratives typically deal with the first kind of political and ethical values, I think there are some modern examples of the latter sort. Freud, for example, is possibly doing something of that kind, in showing how the erotic and some other drives are integral to human nature. His narratives tend to be developmental rather than genealogical: his explanations imagine that the drive develops within a single human life, almost as something that goes wrong in childhood and the raising of children. This has rather unfortunate consequences, since it makes it seem as if the problematic drives are something alien put there by parental mishandling. By contrast, Aristophanes, illustrating a total interdependence of creatures that belong together and yearn to be reunited, properly recognises that

aspect as part of what makes life good and as a source of pleasure insofar as one can achieve some degree of the ideal of intimacy.

Some of our current political and social norms can be explained by their usefulness: we can see how they would have contributed to community life. But some of our values are explained not by their usefulness—they may even have the opposite effect, as love does in Aristophanes' story—but they can be understood as a drive for fulfilment which, despite having no pragmatic value, can be among the things by which we measure the value of our lives. Among the various things of this kind that motivate us, Aristophanes focuses on one—our yearning for intimacy with a beloved other. Philosophy would be another. Possibly that is the point of what Diotima says about the ladder of love.

VII Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on a particular method of argument that is well known in Plato's work but not, I think, well appreciated for what it is. When people write about Plato's use of myth, they generally suppose that Plato sometimes stops doing "philosophy" or "dialectic" and starts telling stories, whether for comfort or entertainment or because (they suppose) he has no argument that can deliver the results that he wants. My thought here is the very reverse. It turns out that these stories (and others like them) *are* the argument: they *are* the dialectic, they *are* doing the logical distinctions, the fancy footwork. The "golden age" and "primitive man" narratives in the dialogues that we have explored here serve as a tool to explore what is integral and what is peculiar in the human condition, to consider how each aspect of human nature affects the possibilities for the good life in our current world. In each case, as we have seen, the moves are moves in the dialectic: they propose and defend a thesis within a larger discussion. Like collection and division, narrative is also a form of discourse that divides and assembles, and makes sense of what we see, but in addition it is also closely related to explanation, in that telling a story that makes sense is a way of giving an explanation that makes sense. This makes it especially effective, as we have seen, as a mode of discourse for defending claims and hypotheses of the kind that these characters are defending: philosophical positions concerning the way human affairs function, and the role of various virtues, passions and political activities in making human life possible, viable, or happy. And as we have seen, this is a recurrent method, especially in discussions of political, social, and anthropological questions, across all periods of Plato's work.

Notes

1 "The fact is that the word 'dialectic' had a strong tendency in Plato to mean 'the ideal method, *whatever that may be*'," Robinson (1941) 1953, 70.

2 Robinson never mentions the myths in his book on dialectic, not even to distinguish them from dialectic, but the implication is clearly that he did not consider that they counted as dialectic, or as anything like the 'ideal method'.
3 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* Bk 3, part 2, section 2.
4 On the method see Nozick 1974 and Williams 2000.
5 Hume and Hobbes are both exploring ways in which human nature can be overcome by more artificial solutions, to reach the current situation. See also below, on *Protagoras*.
6 *Timaeus* 29c–d. The *Timaeus* includes part of a narrative by Critias (which is political) and also a genealogical narrative applied to cosmology. I shall note a few parallels here. See also my earlier piece (Osborne 1996).
7 The *Protagoras* (see below) may parody an original by Protagoras. There are also several Golden Age narratives in the Presocratics and poets, which may also be read as genealogical proofs.
8 All translations are my own.
9 Such sociopaths are *human* (they have all that human nature was originally).
10 This part is developed further in the analogy with music tuition at 327a–328a.
11 See Rowett Forthcoming-a. By contrast, I suggest, Plato's political genealogy in the *Republic* (presented by the character Socrates) is naturalistic. On that point, see also Rowett Forthcoming-b.
12 Notwithstanding the censors (*Laws* VII, 802b1), and the rejection of visiting tragedians (817a-b). The latter is clearly an intertextual correction of the *Republic* and presupposes that the entire aim of philosophy and politics is to enact a dramatic performance of the best kind.
13 For discussion see Gill 2012, 177–185; Sayre 2006, 15–28; Lane 1998, Part 1.
14 Several variant, deviant, or potentially misleading alternative divisions are offered in both the *Statesman* and *Sophist*. Do they show that the method is faulty, and cannot live up to the claim that it captures objective divisions in nature and the forms? The issue is too complex to address here.
15 This opens another question that I shall not settle here, namely whether the dialogue shows a successful and recommended method that works, or a method that is misguided, or less reliable than it promised to be, and more dependent upon the insights of those who deploy it.
16 This point is noted by Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1978, 137).
17 The oscillation in the *Statesman* is closer to the account of Empedocles' cosmic cycle that I defend in Osborne 1987a and Osborne 2005 than to the more mechanistic models proposed in many recent and long-standing twentieth century interpretations.
18 See my earlier reflections on the autochthony motif in that myth and the Cave, in Rowett 2016.
19 This idea of a reverse era without sexual reproduction is also (arguably) a feature in Empedocles, who suggests that under (increasing) love creatures were created in a quite different way (by assembly of body parts), whereas sexual reproduction is a feature of strife's zoogony. The link between (increasing) strife and sexual reproduction is reported by Hippolytus (*Refutation* 7, 29.22), on which see Osborne 1987b, 123, and its fit with what Empedocles was saying is correctly noticed by David Sedley (2005), in the context of an interpretation of how the cosmic cycle was constructed that is controversial in other respects but clearly right on this issue.
20 We shall return to this shortly. The comparable situation of mankind at this stage, in *Protagoras'* story and the myth in the *Statesman*, is noted by Joseph Cropsey (1995, 8–9).

21 See above, Section III.
22 See above, Section IV.
23 The relevant gods would presumably include Demeter, and perhaps Cronus, Dionysus etc.
24 A second exception will be found in our final example here, from the *Symposium*.

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11 Plato's Method of Enquiry in the *Sophist*

The Relation Between the Question 'What is Being?' and the Question 'What is There?'

Pauline Sabrier

The Role of the Question 'What is Being?' in the *Sophist*

A central feature of Plato's method of enquiry is the distinction between questions of the form 'What is X?' and questions of the form 'What are the things that are X?' This is something that we learn from the dialogues (e.g. *Men*. 74b ff.; *Tht*. 146c7 ff.), and also from Aristotle (*Metaph*. A, 987a29–b14). We know that Plato distinguishes these questions in two ways. First, in a number of cases, Plato thinks that one cannot answer the first kind of question on the basis of an answer to the second kind of question. In other words, often when Socrates asks his interlocutor in one of Plato's dialogues 'What is X?', he rejects as inappropriate any answer to this question that is based on pointing to an example or to a set of examples of things that are X (see the *Hippias Major* for a paradigmatic example of this).[1] Second, Plato also thinks that in certain cases, we cannot properly answer the question 'What are the things that are X?' without first knowing the definition of X (cf. *Euthphr*. 5d ff.).

In the *Sophist*, however, in the central sections dedicated to the enquiry about being (242c–259d), the question 'What is there?' seems to be the main question addressed, whereas the question 'What is being?' plays, at most, a minor role.[2] This view has proved quite influential among critics. The reasons for this are partly textual.[3] The question 'What is there?' is explicitly raised at 242c6 and seems to be driving the whole passage, up to 249d4 (Crivelli 2012, 71–2). In introducing the doctrines of his predecessors about being, the Eleatic Stranger portrays them as having said, about the things that are (*ta onta*), how many they are (*posa*) and of what sorts (*poia*) they are (*Sph*. 242c5–6). In short, he portrays them as having given an account of what there is. There are those who fight over the number of things that are—two for the Dualists, one for their Eleatic cousins—and those who are engaged in a battle comparable to that between the giants and the Olympian gods about being (*Sph*. 246a4 ff.). The protagonists of the latter fight, that is, the Giants and the Friends of the Forms, respectively hold the view that all that there is are physical entities and the view that all there is are non-physical intelligible entities.

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In this way, they also are engaged in a dispute over the question 'What is there?' Now, not only do Plato's predecessors seem to be primarily preoccupied with determining what there is, but Plato himself, through the mouth of the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus, seems to be doing exactly the same thing when, at the end of the Gigantomachia passage, they come to the conclusion that being includes all that which is changing and changeless (*Sph*. 249d3–4). If this is correct, it implies that Plato's method of enquiry in the *Sophist* is significantly different from his method in other dialogues.

In this chapter, I propose to tackle this question—that of the relation in the *Sophist* between the question 'What is being?' and the question 'What is there?' The central claim I shall defend is that the relation between the two questions is more complex than critics have usually assumed. In particular, I shall argue that the necessity to raise and address the two questions together emerges right from the beginning of the enquiry about being, at 242b, and that it reaches a first significant result at 250a–d, when the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus establish that being is not the same as what there is. This, as we shall see, has two important consequences for dialectic in Plato's *Sophist*. First, it shows that Plato's method of enquiry in the central sections of the *Sophist* is very much in line with what we find in other dialogues, with regard to the role of the *ti esti* question in a philosophical enquiry. Second, it suggests a different reading of the description of dialectic at 253c–d, where what is at issue is not so much one method of inquiry as opposed to other methods, but the process of enquiry as a whole.

The Hot and the Cold Passage and the Relation Between the Two Questions

The enquiry about being starts with the examination of the views of Plato's predecessors, starting with the Dualists, that is, those who hold the view that there are just two beings: the hot and the cold. The Eleatic Stranger begins to question them along the following lines: when they say that there are just two beings and that these beings are the hot and the cold, what do they mean exactly? More precisely, what do they take 'being' to designate? Do they think that (i) being designates neither the hot nor to the cold, but something else (243e2–4)? Or do they think that (ii) being designates the one or the other, that is, either the hot is the same as being or the cold is (243e4–6)? Or rather, do they think that (iii) being designates the hot and the cold taken together (243e2–4)? As it turns out, none of these options appears satisfactory, because none of them is compatible with the view that there are just these two things, the hot and the cold. On option (i), there turns out to be three things instead of two; whereas on options (ii) and (iii), there turns out to be just one thing instead of two. Disappointed, the Eleatic Stranger then declares that as

long as the Dualists cannot provide a satisfactory answer to this question, they should be left aside. [4]

The question I would like to raise is this: what would it take for the Dualists to alleviate the problem? At first sight, the answer to this question may appear simple: were they ready to give up on their view that there are only two things, their problem would be solved. Indeed, had they not stubbornly stuck to their dualist position, they would have been able to pick up any of the three answers offered by the Eleatic Stranger. In other words, the problem arises in the first place because they are dualists.[5] If this is correct, then, it means that the argument is of limited interest to anyone who does not endorse a dualist position.

Setting dualism aside, we can rephrase the three options offered by the Eleatic Stranger in a different way: either the term 'being' just designates what there is, or it does not.[6] If it does, then either option (ii) or (iii) is correct; if it does not, then option (i) is correct. Read in that way, the question behind the Eleatic Stranger's point is that of the relation between what is designated by the term 'being' and what is designated by an account of what there is: Is 'being' just one term to designate the things that are, in part or in total, or does the term 'being' designates something else? Given their inability to answer the Eleatic Stranger's question, it seems that the Dualists simply never thought about that. They merely assumed that they had said enough: what they designate by the term 'being' is precisely those two beings they pointed to, namely the hot and the cold, and to them, there is nothing more to 'being' than that. The Eleatic Stranger's point is that this cannot be right, for if they really think that what 'being' designates is nothing more than the hot and the cold, then 'being' is actually just one thing, in one way (ii) or another (iii). And if they actually thought the opposite, namely that there is more to 'being' than the hot and the cold, again their answer is simply inadequate.

Now, what would it require, on part of the Dualists, to settle this issue? It would require, it seems, that they do not start pondering the number of things that are, in total, before they have addressed the question of whether what there is is the same thing as what is designated by the term 'being'.[7] For, as we have seen, depending on the answer to that question, the total number of things will vary.[8] But, in turn, what does it require to answer that question? It is interesting to note that this question is understood by the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus alike as a question about the reference of this term, 'being' (*to on*), in their theory, that is, about what these thinkers designate by the term 'being'.[9] It is, as such, not supposed to be a difficult question, for it is only a question about how they use a certain term in their language, in the context of an enquiry about what there is.[10] Surely, answering such a question should not cause any trouble to thinkers who are so far advanced in the enquiry about being that they are able to say how many things there are and of what sorts they are.[11]

It thus only adds to the confusion of the situation that they stumble upon such a harmless question.

It seems to me that what is required to answer the question about their use of the term 'being' is to be able to raise and ask the question 'What is being?', and to do so in addition to and independently of the question 'What is there?'[12] For only if they do not take it for granted that the two questions amount to the same thing can they be in a position to understand the Eleatic Stranger's question and the options that are offered to them. Note that merely raising the question 'What is being?' does not presuppose that being and what there is are actually two different things. Certainly, nothing in that passage rules out that they actually boil down to the same, as options (ii) and (iii) show. As we shall see in the next section of this chapter, we need another argument for the claim that being is not the same as what there is, and this argument is not to be found in the hot and cold passage but after the Gigantomachia.

Now, one might be worried that I am claiming that they should raise the *ti esti* question here. For one thing, the *ti esti* question is a very Platonic—or Socratic, for that matter—question which is assorted with a number of requirements regarding the way it should be answered, and it is typically a question linked to Plato's Forms (Dancy 2004; Politis 2015). The worry here is that this is just too much, and too Platonic, to answer a tiny little question about the use of a term in a specific context. On a different note, critics may object that the Eleatic Stranger's point is precisely a point about language here, and not, as I am suggesting, a point about the nature of being itself.[13] By calling on the *ti esti* question here, I seem to be shifting the debate from semantics to metaphysics, and to be attributing this dubious move to Plato.[14] I think these worries are legitimate, but they are misplaced here. For my point is, simply, that in order to solve their problem, the Dualists must be able to entertain the possibility that what they designate by the term 'being' is not identical with what their account of what there is designates, which is the same as saying that they should be able to ask 'What is being?' independently of and in addition to the question 'What is there?' It is not required, of course, that they answer that question, the question 'What is being?' Actually, we do not know yet how this question is supposed to be answered. However, if it turns out, after a proper enquiry, that what is designated by an answer to the two questions is not one and the same thing—in short, if it turns out that being is not identical with what there is—then, and only then, does it follow that one cannot answer the question 'What is being?' by pointing to an example and exemplar of a thing that is, because, precisely, being and what there is are not the same. Here, we recognize one of the central requirements of the *ti esti* question, one that once incurred the wrath of Peter Geach (1966). The crucial point, however, is that this requirement is not presupposed by the Eleatic Stranger, but necessitated by the argument itself, under the condition that being and what there is are not the same.

At any rate, we do not know yet, at this stage of the enquiry, whether this is the case.

A final remark before moving to the next section: if this chapter has been along the right lines, the task that is required from the Dualists, namely raising the question 'What is being?' in addition to and independently from the question 'What is there?', and asking about the relation between the two questions, is not a task that only applies to them. Rather, it is a task that applies generally to all those who attempt to say, about the things that are, how many they are and of what sorts they are. In other words, it is a task that falls to anyone endeavoring to give an account of what there is.[15] Thus, beyond the particular study of some specific views about being, the Eleatic Stranger is here drawing a general lesson about the proper way of enquiring into these matters.

The Non-Identity Between being and What There Is, or How the Eleatic Stranger Ultimately Argues for Option (i)

If Plato, in the *Sophist*, raises the question of the relation between what being is and what there is, and if, as this chapter has been arguing, this is an issue that he raises right from the beginning of the enquiry about being, then where does he finally answer it, if at all? It seems to me that the decisive move is made in the passage that comes immediately after the Gigantomachia passage, at 249e6 ff. It is notable that the Eleatic Stranger himself explicitly draws attention to the connection between this passage and the hot and cold passage we examined earlier, and even notes that he is not simply going to reiterate the same questions he addressed to the Dualists, but also intends to make some progress with these questions. The passage that starts at 249e6 examines the results of the Gigantomachia passage (245e6–249d4). The Gigantomachia passage stages the battle between the Friends of the Forms and the Giants about being, the former thinkers standing for the view that all that there is are intelligible changeless entities whereas the Giants urge that only changing physical things are. The Gigantomachia ends when the Eleatic Stranger, in a great fanfare and a solemn appeal to the philosopher, concludes that being (*to on*) and the totality (*to pan*) is altogether all that which is changing (*kekinēmena*) and changeless (*akinēta*).[16] In other words, at the end of the Gigantomachia passage, we have an account of what there is, and this account consists in change (*kinēsis*) and rest (*stasis*).[17] The Eleatic Stranger then goes on to test this conclusion and raises questions similar to those addressed to the Dualists. Is being the same as either change or rest (Option 1)? Or is being a third something, not to be confused with either change or rest (Option 2)? Or is being the same as change and rest taken together (Option 3)? In other words, is being the same as what there is (Options 1 & 3), or something else (Option 2)? This time, and unlike what happened during the discussion

with the Dualists, Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger are able to commit themselves to Option 2, that is, the view that being is a third something in addition to change and rest. Hence unlike in the hot and cold passage, Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger have committed themselves to the view that being is not the same as what there is. How did this happen?

To see this, let us take a closer look at the steps that lead to the conclusion that Option 2 is the correct answer.

VISITOR: Very good. You treat change and rest, don't you, as very much opposed to each other?
THEAT.: Of course.
VISITOR: And yet you make the same claim of both and of either of them that they are?
THEAT.: Yes, I do.
VISITOR: Is that because when you agree that they are, you're saying that both and either of them are changing?
THEAT.: Not at all.
VISITOR: Well then, when you say that they both are, are you indicating that they're at rest?
THEAT.: How would I be?
VISITOR: In that case in your mind you're assuming that being is a third thing over and above these, on the basis that both rest and change are embraced by it; you've taken the two of them together and noted the way they both share in being, and that's why you also say they both are—right?
THEAT.: It's probably true that when we say change and rest are we have an obscure notion of being as a third thing.
VISITOR: In which case being is not change and rest together but something other than these.
THEAT.: It seems so.[18]

The first thing to note is the order in which the three options are introduced: the view that being is the same as one of the things that are comes first, then the view that being is a third something, and finally the view that being is the same as all things that are taken together. From the text, it is thus clear that Option 2 is chosen as a result of the denial of Option 1, and that in turn Option 3 is denied because Option 2 has been established already.[19] From this, it follows that the crucial argumentative step is taking place when moving from Option 1 to Option 2. We must try to explain how the denial of Option 1 can lead directly to the conclusion that Option 2 is the correct one, without first necessitating an analysis of Option 3.[20] Option 1 starts in the following way: change and rest are 'most opposed to one another' (*enantiōtata*), but in spite of that, being is said of them in the same way. Since change and rest are opposites, being cannot be either the same as change or the same as rest. Otherwise being

could not be said also of the other. From this, it also follows that being cannot be the same as change and rest taken together, again because change cannot be said of rest and conversely. The only option is thus that being is not the same as change and rest taken together or separately, but something else.[21]

Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger thus succeed where the Dualists had failed. And they succeed in the way I had indicated in the previous section, that is: first, they come to a view about what there is at 249d3–4 but they have not yet committed themselves to a view about the number of things that are, unlike in the hot and cold passage. It is only after they have examined the relations between being, change, and rest—that is, the relation between being and what there is—that they say something about the number of things that are, as the phrase *triton ti* indicates.[22] If this is correct, it means that the conclusion that being is neither identical with change, nor rest, nor the two taken together, and hence different from what there is, is based on the acceptance of the conclusion of the Gigantomachia passage, that is, the view that being involves the pair of opposites, change and rest.[23]

More precisely, the crux of the argument lies in the assertion that change and rest are opposites. Interestingly, this is an assertion that is not found in the hot and cold passage, although we may have assumed that the hot and the cold also are opposites. But as a matter of fact, this assertion is never made there. I am reluctant to put too much emphasis on this, for although the hot and the cold are not said to be opposites, they very much sound like good candidates for opposites. Still, we may think that the fact that they were not identified as opposites is one reason why it was not possible for the Dualists, when their views were examined by the Eleatic Stranger, to choose any of the three answers offered to them, for unlike Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger, they had no reason to reject immediately the suggestion that being may be identical with the one or the other, or with both together. Now, the claim that change and rest are opposites—and not only opposites, but most opposed to one another, as the Eleatic Stranger says, thereby drawing attention to the importance of this point—is also interesting in itself, for it is only clearly formulated at 250a8. From the way this point is introduced, however, that is, without preparation, it is clear that it is meant to arise naturally from the Gigantomachia passage. It is also a good question what this claim exactly entails. Is it that the very same thing cannot be simultaneously at rest and changing in the same way and in the same respect? Or do change and rest work like ontological classes here, things that are being classified either as changing beings or as resting beings, and ruling out that anything belongs to both categories? For the purpose of this chapter, we only require the first, minimal understanding of what is meant by the claim that change and rest are opposites. But it does not rule out the latter, quite the contrary.

One last point: since the conclusion that being is not the same as what there is is primarily based on the conclusion of the Gigantomachia passage at 249d3–4, we may want to ask whether the latter stands firm, or whether it is running the risk of being revised in the enquiry that follows in the dialogue. From the way the Eleatic Stranger casts it, it seems clear that Plato intends this conclusion to be highly significant and far-reaching (Gill 2012, 98–99; Sabrier 2020, 349). For it is not addressed only to the immediate participants in the discussion, that is the Friends of the Forms and the Giants, but also to those who came before, and more generally to the 'philosopher'. This contextual element, I think, strongly suggests that the conclusion of the Gigantomachia passage is unlikely to stand in need of revision.

Being is not the Same as What There is: And Then?

If this chapter has been along the right lines, it means that we finally receive the answer to the question of the relation between being and what there is right after the Gigantomachia passage. But this answer, in turn, raises a new difficulty. In a sense, this difficulty has been looming since the Eleatic Stranger first mentioned the possibility, back in the hot and cold passage, that being is not identical with what there is, but a third something. For already back then, we would have wanted to ask how being could possibly be a third something if what there is is supposed to be exhausted by the hot and the cold. In other words, how could there possibly be something in addition to what there is? What could this possibly mean? This was so unclear in the hot and cold passage that it was not worth asking, since there was no evidence that option (i) was the correct one. Now is the right moment to face it.

The difficulty is made explicit by Theaetetus' reply to the Eleatic Stranger at 250c12–d4:

> VISITOR: […] If a thing is not changing, how is it not at rest? Or if it is in no way at rest, how is it not changing? Yet being has now revealed itself to us as falling outside *both* change *and* rest. Is that possible, then?
> THEAT.: No, nothing would be more impossible!

There are different possible reactions to Theaetetus' statement. A first reaction is to understand it as the sign that a new, clean start is needed. Those who have understood it in this way have accordingly interpreted what comes after this passage as introducing something different from what has come before.[24] There would be, thus, so to speak, two lines of enquiry about being in the dialogue, the one that starts with the examination of the predecessors and runs into the sand, and another, new one, that starts with the Late Learners' passage at 251a5 and continues with the communion of kinds.

Another, more popular, reaction consists in saying that something must have gone wrong, and that the theory now needs to be fixed. This view is less radical than the previous one, because it implies that there is some connection between all that has been accomplished from 242c to 250e and what follows.[25] It is motivated by the view that being, surely, ought to count as a resting being, given that being is a kind (*genos*), and what is more, one of the greatest kinds (*megista genē*, 254d4–5). These critics thus accept the view that being is different from change and rest but try to rescue the claim that being belongs to the things at rest. To them, the problem lies in the assertion that being, by its own nature, neither changes nor rests (250c6–7), or in the assertion that being is external to change and rest (250d2).

There are good reasons for both these interpretations. Nevertheless, in the rest of this chapter, I would like to suggest that there is room for a third option, although I shall not be able to argue for it fully or conclusively.[26] The third option consists in accepting the results that have just been achieved: yes, it is correct to say that being is different from both change and rest, that is, it is correct that being is neither a changing being or a resting being.[27] As argued in the previous section, what this means is that being is not identical with what there is. And if being is not identical with what there is, then being is, necessarily, neither a changing being nor a resting being. I would now like to make room for the claim that this is a viable option, and not a dead end.

The first thing to mention is that the assertion that being is not the same as what there is does not entail that the enquiry about being finds itself at a dead end. What is important here is to realize that Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger have established a negative result: what they tell us is what being is not. In a nutshell: being is not the same as change and rest, that is, being is not the same as what there is. But this is only a negative point. In other words, it does not preclude that being is related to what there is, that is, to change and rest *in some other way than by being identical with them*. My suggestion is that this is the task awaiting Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger in the remainder of the dialogue: working out the relations between being and change and rest, given that they have established that it is not simply one of identity.[28]

One may object that the third option I am proposing cannot get off the ground, because Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger have not only established that being is not the same as change and rest, they have also established that being is unrelated to them. Support for this reading comes from the word *ektos* at 250d2, which goes beyond the mere non-identity claim (Crivelli 2012, 98). In response to this, I believe it is pretty easy to show that this need not be right. Let us come back to the description of being as a *triton ti* a few Stephanus lines before (250b8–11). As already noted, the vocabulary that the Eleatic Stranger uses to describe what it means that being is a *triton ti* is particularly striking.[29] Indeed,

change and rest are literally described as being encompassed by being (*hup' ekeinou* [=*tou ontos*]… *periechomenēn*, 250b9). Now, if we take the language of the Eleatic Stranger at face value here, it points to a solution to our problems. For whatever encompasses something is outside of it but not separate or distinct from it. In other words, we would certainly say that what encompasses is not identical with what is encompassed, but we would not thereby imply that it is something completely different from and unrelated to it. If this is correct, then saying that being is 'outside' of change and rest does not entail that it is unrelated to them. Nor does it entail that being, since it is not identical with what there is, in no way is.[30] In this way, the third option I have sketched allows us to take the claim that being is neither a changing thing nor a resting thing at face value, while avoiding the pitfall that being in no way is. The task that falls on the shoulders of the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus is thus to spell out the nature of this relation that unites being with change and rest, that is, that unites being with what there is. Notice that the reader is already given a hint as to what this relation is about: just on the next line (250b10), the Eleatic Stranger explains that all this has to do with their communion (*koinōnia*) with being. Unsurprisingly, the communion of kinds is the next big topic of the dialogue.

Back to Dialectic and Conclusion

To conclude, let us go back to the question of Plato's method of enquiry in the *Sophist* and to its significance for Plato's dialectic.

Let us return to our initial question, what is the relation between the questions 'What is being?' and 'What is there?' in the *Sophist*? We are now in a position to draw some conclusions. To begin with, if what I have argued for in this chapter has been along the right lines, it follows that the relation between the two questions is very complex. It is not the case, therefore, that 'What is there?' has simply superseded the question 'What is being?', nor is it the case that the question 'What is there?' is simply a first step towards answering the question 'What is being?' Rather, the present study has shown that the two questions are intertwined right from the beginning of the enquiry about being at 242d. More precisely, it has been established that the need to raise the question 'What is being?' emerges from a particular difficulty regarding an enquiry primarily driven by the question 'What is there?' Further on, we learned from 250a–d that the two questions must continue to be addressed together, because once it has been established that being and what there is are not the same, what remains to be done is to work out their relations, now that identity has been ruled out.

The passages examined in this chapter, therefore, offer us an example of Platonic dialectic at its best: a careful step-by-step enquiry that does not presuppose anything, not least the primacy of the *ti esti* question over

other questions, but proceeds from a problem that arises from a particular view about being—a view which, it is worth noticing, is not Plato's—to the search for its solution. Plato's results in the *Sophist* are as much about being itself as about the adequate way of carrying out an enquiry into such a difficult topic. In this respect, what we have seen going on in the *Sophist* is very much in line with what we observe in other dialogues. There is no reason, on this basis, to suspect that Plato has changed his method of enquiry.

To conclude, I would like to draw the reader's attention to a consequence of my reading for dialectic as a whole. The *Sophist* is one of those dialogues where we find a depiction of dialectic. A 253b10, the Eleatic Stranger introduces the idea that there is a science (*epistēmē*) that corresponds to the ability to see, among the kinds, which are capable of communion and which are capable of division. This science is then identified as the science of dialectic (*dialetikē epistēmē*, 253d2–3) and is attributed to the philosopher who is, in turn, described as searching (*zētountes*) for the Form of Being (*tē[i] tou ontos idea[i]*). This passage has proved incredibly difficult to interpret and there is currently no consensus on it.[31] Equally intriguing is the context in which the passage is introduced: why do we find a description of dialectic in the middle of an enquiry about being? The immediate context of the passage gives us the beginning of an answer: we understand how the Eleatic Stranger, having established that kinds combine at 252e6–7, moves on to the idea that we need a science (*epistēmē*) or an art or expertise (*technē*) of the combination of kinds, just like grammar (*grammatikē*) is the expertise in how letters combine to form words (253a), and music is the expertise in how sounds combine to form harmonies (253b). Still, the bigger picture seems to escape us.

However, I believe that what has been examined in this chapter sheds some light on this. Indeed, the description of dialectic provided here seems to mirror the enquiry about being, not only the immediately preceding steps, but the enquiry about being as a whole, starting from 242b. Moving beyond the immediate reference to the communion of kinds, the passage describes in a general way the process by which one uncovers how one Form, or one character (*idea*), can stand in relation to a plurality of other Forms or characters, how they differ from, but also how they relate to, others. In this way, this description of dialectic provides an overview of what has taken place since the enquiry about being started at 242b. From 242b it took almost ten Stephanus pages before Theaetetus and the Eleatic Stranger finally establish the distinction between being and what there is, and accordingly, the distinction between being, change, and rest. Then, as we have seen, as soon as the distinction among the three is established in the clearest way in the *triton ti* passage, there emerges the need to enquire about how they combine, in order not to be stuck with the mere claim that being is not the same as what there is. Now, what I am presenting here as two inverted movements—first, distinguishing

being from change and rest, and then examining their connections—are actually just steps in a single and continuous process, that of an enquiry into the nature of being.

Read in that way, the point of the depiction of dialectic at 253b9–e2 may not be so much to contrast one, Platonic method of enquiry with other, Platonic methods, or, more generally, to contrast one, ultimate or best method of enquiry, with other methods. Rather, it suggests that what Plato is describing here is the process of enquiry as a whole, that is, what a successful enquiry looks like according to him, with no specification of the means or tools to be implemented to achieve it. To put it differently, the point is not so much to describe the steps for someone to follow, but to describe how one, enquiring about a Form, or, more generally, about a character (*idea*), discovers how it stands in relation to a plurality of other Forms or characters, how one learns how to distinguish them and also how one learns about their connections, all this as part of a single enquiry. In this way, we can understand better why this depiction of dialectic happens at that precise moment in the dialogue, that is, in the middle of the enquiry about being. Looking back, the Eleatic Stranger is taking stock of what has been established so far. Looking forward, he is anticipating the forthcoming discovery of sameness and otherness as fourth and fifth kinds. If there is something right in this, then this description of dialectic is nothing but the description of a philosophical enquiry as a whole, of which the present enquiry about being, that started at 242b, is just one example, but a particularly significant one, because it is an enquiry about a topic that is most representative of the philosopher, namely being.

Notes

1 About the conditions under which these requirements are legitimate, see Politis 2015.
2 See for instance Moravcsik 1962, 28; Brown 1998, 182–5.
3 Other reasons include developments in contemporary metaphysics, where, since Quine, the central question is the question of what there is. For the influence of this view on the secondary literature, see for instance Brown 1998, 185.
4 For further discussion of the Stranger's refutation of the Dualists, see the chapter by Cristina Ionescu in this anthology.
5 See for instance Moravcsik 1962, 29; Bordt 1991, 502. For an explicit rejection of this view, see Frede 1996, 190 and Politis 2020, 14.
6 For a similar reconstruction, see Frede 1996. My interpretation agrees with that of Michael Frede on the analysis of what Plato's problem is. It however differs from it in one important respect: while Frede thinks that Plato's solution to this problem is that being itself in no way is a being, a thing that is (cf. 1996, 193), I argue for a more moderate solution, whereby being itself is simply not something that is in the same way other beings are (see note 31 below).
7 The difference between the view I am developing here and the view of critics like Moravcsik and Bordt mentioned in note 5 is thus that I think that more

is required to solve the problem than abandoning the view that there are just two things.

8 Note that Plato introduces theories about what there is as being not only about 'being' (*to on*) but as being about 'the totality' (*to pan*) or 'all things' (*ta panta*). See for instance 243d9 for the Dualists.

9 See for instance the verbs *dēloō* (243d4) and *sēmainō* (244a5) which both mean 'designate', 'indicate'. As Vasilis Politis (2020, 16) points out, this does not imply that 'Plato is committed to a purely reference-based account of what the expression "to be" means'. Politis explains that Plato's point is much narrower here: it is about the way these thinkers use the term 'to be' in the context of their theory of what there is. For the emphasis on language in the central sections of the *Sophist* dedicated to being, see Rijk 1986, 94 and Brown 1998, 183–4.

10 See the emphasis on phrases like *boulomai kalein* (243e8) or *boulomai sēmainein* (244a5), which show that the question is really about how *they* use that term, 'being' in this precise context, and not about how this term is used in general.

11 The Eleatics, whose views are examined right after those of the Dualists, confess that they actually do not find the question at all easy (*ou pantōn rha[i] ston*, 244c6). But just like in the case of the Dualists, their difficulty seems due to their own theory, which does not allow them to answer that question without contradicting themselves, rather than to the question itself.

12 I mean 'independently' here in the sense of 'not reducible to'. The point is not that the two questions should not be raised together—quite the contrary—, only that it should not be taken for granted that they just amount to the same question.

13 On the question of Plato's distinction between the question 'What is F?' and the question 'What do you call F?', as defended in Charles 2006, see Peter Larsen's contribution to this anthology. My chapter does not engage with this issue in general. With regards to the specific passages in the *Sophist* I am referring to, all that can be said is that if Plato distinguishes these two questions, he does not intend to separate them, but to think of them as being intrinsically connected in the following way: the Dualists cannot answer the question about the way they use the term 'being' in relation to what there is if they are not able to ask what being is (*ti esti to on*) and to ask this independently from what there is. For a similar point, see Politis 2020, 16.

14 See Politis 2020 here, who provides a thorough analysis of this problem in the context of the hot and cold passage.

15 Hence it also applies to the Eleatics, as we see from 244b6 ff., as well as to the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus (250a ff.).

16 Note here that the conclusion is not meant only to apply to being (*to on*) but also to the totality (*to pan*). This is similar to the hot and cold passage, where the account of what there is that is given is also meant to be an account of all things. See note 8.

17 See below for the difference between this account of what there is and that of the Dualists.

18 Translation from Rowe 2015 throughout.

19 See in particular the ἄρα at 250b8.

20 This is different from the Eleatic Stranger's argument at 252d–e, where the third option is chosen because the first two options lead to unsatisfactory results.

21 I shall leave aside for a moment the question of the very interesting vocabulary that the Eleatic Stranger uses here to describe the relation between being,

change and rest at 250b7–10. To the notable exception of Jacob Klein (1934, 85) and Mary Louise Gill (2012, 207–9), most critics have ignored it, but it is striking that the Eleatic Stranger describes how being relates to change and rest as literally encompassing or containing change and rest. I shall come back to this briefly at the end of Section 4.

22 Most critics have thoughts that the phrase *triton ti* here means nothing more than that being is a third kind in addition to that of change and rest. In a sense, they are correct, but it seems to me that there is more to this phrase, as the parallel with the hot and cold passage suggests. For further discussion of the notion of 'a third' in Plato, see the contribution to this volume by Francisco Gonzalez.

23 Unlike what has sometimes been suggested (e.g. Stough 1990), it is not the case that the denial of Option 3 is in conflict with the conclusion of the Gigantomachia passage. The denial of Option 3 rather comes as a clarification: when they said that being or the totality is both together all that is changing and all that is at rest, they did not mean that being is the same as all changing and all resting things taken together, but that it encompasses them without being identical to them.

24 Francis M. Cornford (1935) offers a paradigmatic example of the view that what comes after the Gigantomachia passage is unconnected. To him, the Eleatic Stranger 'changed the subject from a metaphysical consideration of the nature of the real to a different field, which we should call Logic' (252). See also 248–251 and 277–8.

25 This is the dominant view. See, for instance, Crivelli 2012, 98–101.

26 A full account of this problem would require an analysis of the relation between the *triton ti* passage and later passages, especially the passage at 252d9–10 where the Eleatic Stranger seems to deny that the kind 'change' is in any way at rest, and the argument for the introduction of sameness and otherness as a fourth and fifth kind (254d4 ff.) that displays an argumentative pattern similar to that of the *triton ti* passage. It would also require reconsidering the so-called parity assumption between being and not-being. It is, however, not the place to provide such an analysis here.

27 Unlike the supporters of the second interpretation, I do not need to argue that there is an issue with the Stranger's move from the claim that being is a *triton ti* to the claim that being, by its own nature, neither changes nor rests. On the reading I am suggesting, these two claims amount to the same, as I am going to make clear in what follows. It seems to me that this is a point in favor my reading, for there is no evidence, in the text, that the Eleatic Stranger does not intend these two assertions to be fully in line with one another (see for instance ἆρα at 250c6). For a different reading, see Crivelli 2012, esp. 98–9.

28 This is similar to the view developed by Klein in his 1934 article, esp. 90–92, where he argues that sameness and otherness are introduced on the basis of the relation among being, change and rest. Klein talks about the 'duplicity of being' ('Doppelheit des Seins', 93), which goes beyond the point that I am making here, but nevertheless points in the same direction, namely the search for the relation among the three. Unlike the interpretation I have been defending here however, Klein thinks that the claim that being is a 'third something' is ultimately rejected (91).

29 See note 22.

30 I come back here to the point I made about Frede's interpretation in note 6. The vocabulary used by the Eleatic Stranger in this passage illustrates very well, I think, how the point that being itself is not identical with the other beings, taken as a group or in isolation, does not entail that being itself in no way is a being.

31 It is disputed whether this passage refers to the method of collection and division, and whether the latter is identical with dialectic as such. On the former issue, see in particular the controversy between Alfonso Gómez-Lobo (1977, 1981) and Wolfgang Waletzki (1979) against Julius Stenzel (1917). See also the chapter by Cristina Ionescu in this anthology. On the latter issue, see the recent contribution from Jens Kristian Larsen (2020).

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12 Dialectic as Philosophical Divination in Plato's *Phaedrus*

Marilena Vlad

In this chapter I concentrate on Socrates' speeches about love in the *Phaedrus*, emphasizing the strong link between Platonic dialectic and divination.

Dialectic has many faces in Plato's writings. Starting from the Socratic discussions that are intended to test the consistency of the interlocutor's opinions, dialectic then appears as a procedure aimed at determining the precise place that a certain thing occupies in the structure of species and genera of reality (*Sophist* 253d2–e4). *Phaedrus* depicts dialectic as a method of collection and division (265c5–266c1) whose goal is to produce discourse accompanied by knowledge (276e). In the *Republic*, dialectic is presented as a systematically applied procedure through which one can identify the essence of a particular thing, thus ascending to the realm of the Forms, governed by the principle of the Good (532a–b), so that, in the end, dialectic leads to the first principle (537c). In other dialogues, dialectic is depicted as an explicit analysis of the interconnection of the Forms, as exemplified in the *Parmenides*.

The main part of the scholarly work dedicated to dialectic in the *Phaedrus* discusses the method of collection and division and its use for rhetoric, namely for producing persuasive discourse,[1] or as a source of knowledge of natural kinds.[2] Other scholars discuss the implications of this method for knowledge of the human soul,[3] or its link with the pre-discursive knowledge implied in recollection.[4] Taking this last line of interpretation further, I will underline an aspect of dialectic that has so far been underrepresented in the scholarly literature.[5] I argue that dialectic is essentially connected with divination; more precisely, it is rooted in an act of divination and it starts as a type of divination, one that we may call a "philosophical divination". While popular divination is not proper knowledge, this "philosophical divination" delivers a certain divine message accompanied by understanding.

In the *Phaedrus*, divination appears as Socrates' own *experience* during his first speech, as a *power* of the human soul in general, as a philosophical *theme*, linked to that of love and of reminiscence, and as an *event*

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which determines the second speech, the one concerning dialectic and the theme of divination itself.

The present analysis will concentrate on three ways in which dialectic is linked to divination in the dialogue. *First*, at a practical level, divination determines the dialectical structure of Socrates' speech about love; in fact, the speech becomes properly dialectical through the intervention of divination. *Second*, at a theoretical level, dialectic appears in the *Phaedrus* as a particular type of divination, namely the one associated with the madness of love. *Third*, Socrates describes his own dialectical speech as being delivered according to fortune, as pleasing to the gods and finally as a divine message received from the gods of the place in which he gives the speech.

Socrates' Divination and the Dialectical Framework of the Dialogue

Socrates' first speech is ambiguous when it comes to its dialectical character. Socrates seems to be dissatisfied with it from the very beginning, even before he starts it. He speaks against his will, forced by Phaedrus (236d). What explains this dissatisfaction? In fact, this speech will later (265e–266a) be presented as the first part of a larger dialectical discourse. Thus, at the end of his second speech, Socrates looks back to the first one and speaks about the two of them together, as forming a single dialectical unit, in which, just like in a living being, one can identify distinct parts, and which proceeds according to division and collection. In order to explain these traits of the dialectical speech, Socrates rehabilitates the first speech, which he has previously considered to wrong the gods. It is only this duality and even opposition of the two speeches that brings to light the dialectical nature of Socrates' whole speech. It would have been wrong to stop immediately after the first speech, but, once the second speech was uttered and accepted as a palinode, the first one can be placed adequately within the frame of this larger dialectical discourse.[6]

Then, how are we to explain Socrates' dissatisfaction with his first speech? The answer is connected with what Socrates has divined during his speech. His attitude is ambiguous. At first, he does not even want to speak and he wants to finish as soon as possible. But even though he wavers, he starts out confidently, and even notices that he seems to be inspired by a god and that he suffers from a "divine passion" (238c6: θεῖον πάθος πεπονθέναι). Thus, it seems that this first speech is also given (or at least begun) under the guidance of the gods. Moreover, Socrates notices: "There's something really divine about this place, so don't be surprised if I'm quite taken by the Nymphs' madness as I go on with the speech. I'm on the edge of speaking in dithyrambs as it is" (238c9–d3).[7]

Socrates next entices Phaedrus to listen to the rest of the speech, because he fears he could be deprived of inspiration any moment. He is, however,

confident that the god will take care of this (238d5–7). At the end of the speech, he is again uneasy, he does not want to continue speaking about the non-lover. He realizes that, even though he was criticizing the lover, he eventually turned to epic poetry, which is more adequate for praising, than for criticizing (241e). He therefore fears that, if he accepted to praise the non-lover, he would be completely seized by the inspiration from the Nymphs. But this makes it even more difficult to understand why he did not want to continue his speech and praise the non-lover, under the guidance of the Nymphs.

When Socrates tries to leave and cannot leave, we find out the reason for his dissatisfaction with the first speech, as well as for his resenting the idea of continuing his speech. He explains what happened:

> My friend, just as I was about to cross the river, the familiar divine sign came to me which, whenever it occurs, holds me back from something I am about to do. I thought I heard a voice coming from this very spot, forbidding me to leave until I made atonement for some offense against the gods. In effect, you see, I am a diviner (μάντις), and though I am not particularly good at it, still […] I am good enough for my own purposes. I recognize my offense clearly now. In fact, the soul too, my friend, is itself a sort of diviner; that's why, a while ago (πάλαι) during my speech, I was disturbed by a very uneasy feeling, as Ibycus puts it, that 'for offending the gods I am honored by men'. But now I understand exactly what my offense has been.
>
> (242b8–d2)

This passage is extremely important for the whole dynamic of the dialogue, as well as for the general structure of the theme of love. Had Socrates continued along the lines of praising the non-lover, he would have obtained a whole speech with two parts: the one criticizing the lover, the other praising the non-lover. Yet the appearance of the divine sign leads the speech in a different direction, giving it a dialectical turn. Let's see how.

The cited passage joins two instances of Socrates' divination: one that occurs during his first speech and the other when he tries to leave.[8] It is only by putting these two divinations together and understanding them in relation to each other that Socrates eventually sees his speech change direction and take a dialectical turn. During his first speech Socrates already had a kind of divination, insofar as he felt uneasy about what he was saying. The moment where Socrates begins to be dissatisfied with his speech could be immediately after he says that he is divinely inspired, but that it is possible that he will lose inspiration.[9] In fact, at this point, love is described as a sickness (238e4–5), a description that will lead to the conclusion that love is madness and a bad thing. The second speech will start from the overturning of this statement, namely from the idea

that the madness seizing the lover is not a bad thing (244a), and that its presence is essential for the philosophical endeavor. This overturning, however, was prompted by the intervention of the divine sign. Usually, the divine sign prevents Socrates from doing something,[10] but it never forces him to do anything.[11] And yet, here, the divine sign does more than stop Socrates. If the divine sign had simply prevented him from leaving, he would have returned and continued the speech. He would have given the speech that Phaedrus was expecting, about why one should give one's favors to the non-lover. But Socrates does not do this. He thinks he heard a *voice* forbidding him to leave until he had made *atonement* for the offense against the gods. This matches what Socrates says he had already felt and divined during his speech (i.e. that he was offending the gods). Thus, the divine sign makes him reconsider his own divination and take it as the starting point of the second speech. The divine sign makes Socrates follow the divination that he had during the first speech and completely overturn the hypothesis from which this first speech started, i.e. that sickness associated with love is always a bad thing. The divine sign confirms Socrates' divination. Without Socrates' divination in the middle of his speech, the divine sign could not have been properly understood. Eventually, Socrates declares himself to be a diviner,[12] capable of understanding the divination he had during the speech, as well as the daimonic sign. In fact, these two transmit the same message: i.e. that he should make atonement to the gods, returning to the moment in which he felt that the divine inspiration might leave him.[13]

There is, thus, a double manner of divination that changes the course of the speech and of the whole dialogue: first, Socrates' divination through the feeling of uneasiness during the first speech; second, the divine sign. The first dialectical framework consisted in the idea that one should not love the lover, but rather love the non-lover. This framework is abandoned. The second dialectical framework, reached through divination, consists in the supposition that one should not love the lover who looks for pleasure, but rather love the lover who looks for the good.

Yet divination does more than to guarantee that Socrates continues to speak. In fact, it restores the link between the speaker and the gods. Socrates explains that his mistake in the first speech consisted in the fact that this speech was "close to being impious" (242d7). So, the divination expressed through Socrates' feeling of uneasiness marks the point of separation from the divine inspiration and also marks the moment where the speech risks becoming "horrible" (δεινὸν λόγον: 242d4), i.e. foolish and impious. What exactly does a "horrible speech" mean in this context? The word δεινόν has an ambiguous, ironic sense, because it refers to those who are considered skilled in the art of writing speeches, but who, in fact, are simply sophists, and not true philosophers. Lysias is described as "the best (or the most skillful: δεινότατος) of our writers" (228a1). Then, when Socrates overturns the hypothesis of the first speech and tries

to prove that madness is given to us by the gods, he says that this proof will not be accepted and believed by the skillful (δεινοῖς), but only by the wise (σοφοῖς: 245c2). He distinguishes between the skillful and the wise, in a context in which δεινοῖ seems to have a positive meaning but is in fact ironical and negative. In this way, Socrates' first speech risked remaining a δεινὸν λόγον, if divination had not intervened.

This divination, which restores the piety of the speech and the link with the gods, transforms this would-be "horrible speech" into a dialectical one. How? Through the fact that Socrates comes to understand the offense and to attempt to atone for it, but also through the fact that the second speech will thematically focus on the relationship with the gods and on how they are involved in the dialectical knowledge, precisely through divination.

Dialectic as a Type of Divination

Socrates' second speech is a dialectical one that at the same time enquires about the nature of dialectical speeches. Its guiding intuition is received through divination, when the divine sign suggests that Socrates has offended the gods and that he should now praise the lover, instead of criticizing him. Moreover, this second speech also presents divination (associated with the madness of love) as a condition of true knowledge (249c–d). Eventually, it will prove to be a piece of divination or a speech made while under the power of divination: both because it speaks about true being—which can only be done through divine madness—, but also because, at the end, it will be understood as a "message […] from the gods of the place" (279b1–2). In fact, the subject of this second speech—which took its impulse from Socrates' divination and which praises love as divine madness—is precisely divination, as a method of capturing the divine madness and of obtaining all the good things that come from divine madness.

I will try to show how the dialectical speech develops as a specific type of divination. My analysis will proceed in three steps. First, I show how divine madness is associated with divination. Second, I show that any divine madness has a form of divination associated with it. This divination is the art of that particular madness and has the role of revealing it and translating it in a correspondent discourse. Third, I show that, in the case of love as divine madness, the art of madness (or art of love) associated with it is precisely dialectic.

(I) How does Plato link divination with madness? Most evidently, through the etymological connection between their respective names: *mantikē* (the art of divination) and *manikē* (the art of madness) (244c2). In addition, it was the event of divination that brought about the speech about madness. Socrates understands that he has offended the gods.

And the atonement—requested by the divine sign—starts with the idea that madness is not always a bad thing, as it was assumed in the first speech. In other words, the second speech is prompted by the *divination* of the fact that *madness* is rather a good thing and a "gift of the god" (244a7–8). Furthermore, Socrates begins his speech on madness by actively praising those who use the divinely inspired *divination* (244b3–4: ὅσοι μαντικῇ χρώμενοι). In other words, good madness is not introduced rationally, as an alternative hypothesis, or as a simple continuation of the first speech. Rather, in a circular way, the divine madness is introduced through Socrates' divination, while genuine divination itself can only be acquired through divine madness. The second speech starts with a divination about the very condition of any divination, about what divination really is: i.e. the result of divine madness.[14]

(II) Divination is the art associated with divine madness, and it is "the most beautiful art" (244c1: τῇ καλλίστῃ τέχνῃ), since madness is a divine gift, acquired through a divine providence (244c3: θείᾳ μοίρᾳ γίγνηται).[15] This "most beautiful art," however, cannot simply be the art of prophecy, taken in its popular sense. In fact, the popular kind of prophecy comes only fifth in the later ranking of the vocations of the soul (248d7–e1). People of "our days" call divination μαντική, instead of μανική, and restrict divination in the sense that they regard it as belonging only to prophecy. But Plato suggests that divination was originally the art associated with any kind of divine madness, and not just with the one strictly linked to foretelling the future, like the art of the prophetess of Delphi, the priestesses at Dodona and the Sybil. In this way, he enlarges the concept of divination. If divine madness is a kind of super-rational access to reality, divination is the art of this madness, i.e. the fashion in which human beings can grasp and transmit this madness. Divination provides the "message" of any experience of divine possession.

Therefore, when Plato distinguishes four types of divine madness, there are also four types of divination that correspond to these kinds of madness. The four types of madness described by Plato all have three things in common: *first*, a certain form of inspiration or possession coming from a certain god; *second*, a specific way of expressing this madness (i.e. a certain art associated with it, a particular divination, intended to give this kind of madness its proper expression); *third*, an effect that this divination has upon people, which consists in a certain kind of good that it provides.

Let's consider these types of madness one by one and see how they work. The first, associated with Apollo, is what people usually call divination (244a8–b1). The specific art of this madness consists in the fact that it "foretells many things." And its effect is that it "gives sound guidance

to many people" (244b4–5). The second type of madness, associated with Dionysus, is the one that expresses itself through prophecy, prayer, mystic rites, and purifications. The effect of this divination is that it produces "relief from present hardships" (244d5–a1). The third form of madness, which is "possession by the Muses" (245a2: ἀπὸ Μουσῶν κατοκωχή τε καὶ μανία), is expressed through songs and poetry, which glorify the achievements of the past. The effect of this type of divination is that it "teaches [these achievements] to future generations" (245a1–8).

We may notice that, in the first speech, the lover looking for pleasure was supposed to do great harm to the loved one, depriving him of the best of the goods, which is the education of the soul (241c5). By contrast, the effect of these three types of madness (and implicitly of divination) is precisely a certain education or guidance for the soul. The first one "gives sound guidance to many people," the second one gives "refuge in prayers […] safety and […] relief from present hardships." The third one teaches the achievements of the past to future generations.

Moreover, while this "mad" and "most beautiful" art (to which the men of old referred) is the one that discerns the future (ᾗ τὸ μέλλον κρίνεται), we notice that in fact each of these three kinds of madness has a certain relation to the future, in order to transmit a certain knowledge that is not directly accessible in the present. The first, which is linked to popular divination, foretells future events. The second, which refers to rituals and prayers, concerns events of the past that affect the future. The third, connected with the madness coming from the Muses, concerns past events, but it also transmits knowledge to future generations.

(III) These three types of madness prepare for the analysis of the fourth one, which is "the best of all the forms that possession by god can take," (249e1: πασῶν τῶν ἐνθουσιάσεων ἀρίστη) namely the "madness of love" (265b5: ἐρωτικὴν μανίαν). This last form of madness is caused by the fact that the soul has seen the divine reality before becoming embodied and can remember, in this life, what it saw up there.[16] More precisely, this type of madness manifests itself when the souls—who retain the memory of the divine reality—see something that resemble that reality. As a result, they are startled (ἐκπλήττονται), "they are beside themselves (οὐκέτ' ἐν αὑτῶν γίγνονται), and their experience (πάθος) is beyond their comprehension because they cannot fully grasp what it is that they are seeing" (250a6–b1).[17] The soul of the lover does not understand what it remembers, just as the diviner does not understand what he sees in his trance, but his message needs an interpretation. This is why, even for this type of divine possession, we need a specific divination, i.e. an adequate expression, in order to understand its message. The first three sorts of madness are not simple states of "possession," but in each case the "possession" is accompanied by a particular mode of expression: foretelling

> things, prayers or songs, and poetry. In the same way, the fourth type of madness has a specific way of expressing its divine inspiration, i.e. a certain type of "divination," which can transfer the divine inspiration into a proper message and proffer it.

In this fourth case, the decoding, or "divining," is carried out through the method of dialectic. The one who can perform this "divination" is the philosopher, because he has fully contemplated the celestial place and has the most precise memory of it (249c4–6: "it is fair that only a philosopher's mind grows wings, since its memory always keeps it as close as possible to those realities by being close to which the gods are divine."). This is why he can correctly interpret what he remembers when he sees the things in this world as images of real being. Yet, down here, "the senses are so murky that only a few people are able to make out, with difficulty, the original of the likenesses they encounter here" (250b3–5). In order to do this, i.e. to step from the likenesses to the original, "a human being must understand speech in terms of general Forms, proceeding to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity" (249b6–c1: δεῖ γὰρ ἄνθρωπον συνιέναι κατ' εἶδος λεγόμενον, ἐκ πολλῶν ἰὸν αἰσθήσεων εἰς ἓν λογισμῷ συναιρούμενον). This corresponds to the definition of the dialectical process of collection (265d–e).

On the one hand, any human soul can and must, through its very nature, use division and collection, simply in order to speak and think.[18] In fact, a soul can never even be human, if it is completely devoid of this capacity and if it has never had access to real being (249b5–6). On the other hand, however, the type of collection that can take us from the plurality of perceptions to the unity of the Form is "dialectical" in a pure, technical sense. The philosopher (or dialectician, as he will be identified in 266c1) divides and collects guided by recollection, but his mind is not directed towards the things with which other people are concerned (249d1: ἐξιστάμενος δὲ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων σπουδασμάτων). Rather, his mind is always turned towards the divine realities, i.e. towards the Forms,[19] he remembers the divine realities and he uses correctly what he remembers (249c7: ὑπομνήμασιν ὀρθῶς χρώμενος). While engaged in this type of dialectic, the philosopher is in a state of divine possession and also in a state of initiation.[20]

Thus, dialectic refers to "objects" that can only be grasped through the "madness of love," and, as such, dialectic becomes the divination associated with this madness. Through dialectic—which implies both identifying the unique Form present in many (collection) and identifying the many types of things subsumed under a single Form (division)—the philosopher expresses the very message of this madness of love, which is the fourth type of divine possession.[21] In other words, dialectic is not a purely rational human enterprise; it is not just a technical method that we can apply when it suits us. On the contrary, it contains a divine element, in as

much as it must be guided by the Forms, or by the memory of the Forms, i.e. by real, divine being. Dialectic has a divinatory nature, in as much as it is not a human analysis of some objects to which we have direct access, but is linked to the intuition—obtained through divine inspiration—of the Forms. The knowledge of the Forms, which was accessible in a divine vision in the disembodied state, is no longer directly accessible to us in our present state. In our embodied state, it is accessible only indirectly, namely through divine inspiration or possession, when we recall the divine reality and re-integrate this recollection, through dialectic.

The divine madness associated with love must not necessarily be understood as an irrational element. Rather, it is an indirect access to the divine reality, to real being. Hence, dialectic appears as an activity of translating the content and message of this divine madness into the more systematic form of philosophical knowledge. In this sense, it functions as a divination, i.e. as interpretation of a divinely inspired message. Dialectic is the rationalization of the divine, inaccessible being. From this point of view, dialectic, though specifically human and a philosophical activity, appears as a capacity that extends beyond ordinary human knowledge. This explains why the philosopher is considered to be out of his mind. Dialectic does not concern human knowledge, in its common use and sense, but it concerns a divine level of reality, of real being, which is both the source of any human knowledge, and also the highest and final goal of this knowledge. This is why dialectic requires both a systematic analysis, and a divine inspiration, which consists in the very ability to go beyond the sensible things and to see them as images of real, intelligible being.

Dialectic is thus "the art of love" (257a7–8: τὴν ἐρωτικήν τέχνην), the particular art of the madness associated with love. It is a way of conveying the message of this divine inspiration or madness. As such, it plays the role of divination (μαντικήν), i.e. of this "mad art," discerning the future (244c1: ᾗ τὸ μέλλον κρίνεται). In fact, dialectic refers to past events that precede the time span of the human life on earth, but eventually, its role is to prepare the soul for the ultimate future, after the earthly life. Dialectic would thus be an attempt to translate into our human language the divine inspiration brought to us by the madness of love, just as the prophecies transmitted the divine message of the prophetess' madness, or the inspired poetry transmitted the message of the madness induced by the Muses.

There is a certain circularity and double implication of divination and dialectic in the *Phaedrus*, which affects the very structure of the dialogue. On the one hand, the dialectical speech given by Socrates systematically presents the four types of divine madness and divination, one of which is typical for dialectical discourse. On the other hand, divine madness (and hence divination) is the type of madness that sets any dialectical analysis in motion.[22] Circularly, Socrates can show how divine madness determines dialectic, precisely when, driven by his own divinatory

inspiration, he dialectically analyses the types of madness, identifying the unique form that links them all, as well as distinguishing what is proper to each of them.

Socrates' Dialectic Discourse as Divinely Inspired

The link between dialectic and divination in the *Phaedrus* is underlined through the intervention of Socrates' divination, which determines the dialectical framework of Socrates' speech, and also through the analysis of what a dialectical discourse should be like. At the end of the dialogue, however, these two aspects are linked together: Socrates' whole speech is now proven to be a dialectical discourse about the very condition of dialectical discourse and also proves to be received through divine inspiration, in a state of divination. Not only was Socrates' speech determined by the episode of divination, but now, in its entire structure and content, it appears as placed under divine guidance. Thus, it proves to be composed through the intervention of fortune (τύχη), in a "mad" (μανικῶς) opposition of its two parts, as pleasing to the gods and as a message from the gods of the place.

Considering his two-limbed speech, Socrates mentions that it was delivered "by some chance" (262c10: κατὰ τύχην γέ τινα). By a good chance or fortune, he gave two speeches and, moreover, two opposite speeches, which are linked together like the left and the right hand of a living being. Socrates insists on this idea of fortune (τύχη), which he mentions twice. The second time, he notices that, if the speech passed from criticism to praise, this passage, too, was determined by fortune (ἐκ τύχης, 265c9). This fortune is the reason why the speech has the structure of a dialectical discourse and exhibits the two forms that Socrates can afterwards explain "by means of a systematic art" (τέχνῃ): collection with division.[23] Thus, the dialectic character of the discourse does not result from a preestablished structure, or from a predefined method, rationally chosen and applied, but from the intervention of fortune, namely through the divination which determined Socrates to give the second speech. And the intervention of this good fortune is explained by the presence of the divinities of the place (262d3), since Socrates himself pretends not to master the art of oratory. He even speaks about his "double discourse" as a gift sent by the "messengers of the Muses" (262d4–5: οἱ τῶν Μουσῶν προφῆται […] ἐπιπεπνευκότες ἂν ἡμῖν εἶεν τοῦτο τὸ γέρας).

This opposition between the two speeches is described as a "mad" one (265a5: μανικῶς), in the sense in which madness is a godly inspiration. More precisely, the two kinds of madness in the two speeches (i.e. the human and the divine madness) are now linked under a single concept. And this act of bringing them together in their oppositeness is presented as carried out "madly," i.e. under the sign of divine madness.[24] In other words, the dialectical character of the discourse results from its

being uttered while under the spell of divine madness and inspiration. Conversely, the discourse is dialectical also because it seizes and explains this "madness," i.e. this divine inspiration given through a divine intervention. As such, dialectical discourse—Socrates' speech, for instance, composed of the two speeches, but considered as one—plays the role of the art of the divine madness, i.e. the role of divination.[25]

Composed in a "mad" manner and according to good fortune, dialectical discourse is also the one that best pleases the gods (274b9), because it is a living discourse, which the dialectician plants into the soul, and not a written one, which, according to Ammon's prophecy, would induce forgetfulness and make people think they are wise, though they are not (275a). Thus, Socrates suggests that there is much beauty in a dialectical discourse that is sown in a soul (276e4–5), and Phaedrus adds that in Socrates' discourse there is even more beauty (277a). He thus suggests that the real dialectical discourse, which pleases the gods, is Socrates' discourse, the one that he is proffering and sowing, but also speaking about. Moreover, the discourse pleases the gods because it grasps the truth about its object, by defining and dividing it into kinds, proceeding according to the dialectical method.

Plato insists on this trait of dialectical discourse. Thus, we are told that the dialectical analysis (dividing existing things into species and then uniting them in a single form) is "a laborious effort a sensible man will make not in order to speak and act among human beings, but so as to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods (τοῦ θεοῖς κεχαρισμένα) as much as possible" (273e5–8). Then, Socrates raises the question how to please the god (θεῷ χαριῇ) when speaking or conducting a discussion (274b9–10).[26] The answer to this question is given through a story reported by the men of old, who knew the truth (274c1–2). The discourse that pleases the god is that of the dialectician, who "chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge" (276e7). And in order to compose such a dialectical discourse, one must know the truth about the thing one speaks about and be able to define it and divide it into kinds (277b5–8). Second, one must understand the nature of the soul. Yet to know the truth in this context requires that one has had access to the truth, in the "plain of the truth," when the soul was in a disembodied state, so that to know the truth eventually means to recognize the truth that we have once contemplated. This, however, can only be done through the fourth kind of divine madness. Hence, dialectical discourse results from divine madness and also explains what we have acquired through this divine madness.

The fact that the fourth type of divine madness is a necessary condition for dialectic can also be the reason why Plato disapproves of written discourse. Written discourse is deprived of the direct inspiration that comes from divine madness. Moreover, such a discourse can be accessible to anyone, whereas the genuine dialectical discourse should only be sown

into a soul that is capable of receiving it (276e6: ψυχὴν προσήκουσαν), i.e. a soul able to recall real being and to receive divine inspiration and madness. In other words, the dialectical discourse, which pleases the gods, should never be reduced to a piece of "sound" argumentation, deprived of any "mad" intuition of divine reality.

At the end of the dialogue, Socrates presents his own discourse as a message from the gods of the place (279b1–2), a message addressed to any discourse writer, concerning the very nature of a discourse composed artfully.[27] And the message of the gods refers to dialectical discourse, and more precisely to the kind of discourse that pleases the gods: one which is accompanied by knowledge of the truth, and which is not written, but rather a live one, because the author can defend it and at the same time prove the "little worth" of his writings (278c4–7). The author of such a discourse can be named after the reality that he pursues, namely φιλόσοφος, lover of wisdom, while only the god is wise (278d3–4). This also means that dialectical discourse is essentially about divine reality, since its author pursues the wise, i.e. the god. The lover of wisdom is a lover of the god. Earlier, Socrates was saying that, when he finds a dialectician, he follows his footsteps as if they belonged to a god (266b5–7). Thus, the traces of the dialectician are like the traces of the god that he follows. To be a philosopher means to remember divine reality dialectically, but only as it pleases the gods and according to the divine message. Thus, the message of the gods is stating the conditions under which someone can pursue divine reality and follow in the steps of the god.

Socrates' dialectical discourse, which is an example of discourse pleasing the gods, contains an obvious circularity. It is a divination, received as a divine message, about how any dialectical discourse should be, namely pleasing to the gods, pursuing divine reality, dividing and collecting according to the forms that we remember in a state of divinely inspired madness. In other words, it is a divination about the fact that any dialectical discourse should contain an element of divination. The dialectical discourse proves to be the one that conveys, in our human language, the divine madness that gives us access to true reality or through which we remember true reality. Conversely, the dialectical discourse itself can only be received as a type of divination, as effect and expression of divine madness, as a message from the gods that is also pleasing to the gods.

To conclude, dialectic in the *Phaedrus* appears as a philosophical discourse written in the soul, accompanied by knowledge and consisting in an analysis of divine reality, through divisions and collections. As such, it plays the role of divination, in correlation with the highest form of divine madness, namely the "madness of love," manifested through the recollection of divine reality.[28] The dialectical discourse is the one that pleases the gods best, and it comes as a divine gift and message. The madness that seizes us when we see things resembling true, divine reality, makes us remember the things up there, the true, divine reality, "which has beauty,

wisdom, goodness, and everything of that sort" (246e1). It is the role of dialectic to convey and to explain this reality.

Notes

1 See for instance Griswold 1986, 173–185 and Yunis 2008, 2013.
2 See Henry 2011, which underlines the importance of division and collection for formulating definitions that reflect natural kinds (234).
3 Larsen 2010 argues that the dialectical method in the *Phaedrus* does not aim at knowledge of natural kinds in general, but at knowledge of the human soul. Moreover, Larsen 2020 argues that collection and division help us understand how a unitary thing can also be seen as plural: for instance madness or the soul (124).
4 Ionescu 2012 argues that the dialectical method is supported by recollection and refers to what recollection provides.
5 On the Platonic theme of divination see for instance the study by Peter T. Struck (2016, 41), who notes the following: "Plato uses divination as an authoritative piece of his cultural context, to specify with greater precision his own ideas about ways of knowing". See also McPherran 1991, 358: "despite the pride of place Socrates grants to 'secular' ratiocination, he also holds that extrarational signs make significant contributions to his knowledge and belief-states"; and McPherran 1996, 186. Kathryn Morgan (2010, 63) notes that "Plato takes the cultural structures of divination and makes them over into the image of philosophy".
6 On the unity of the two discourses, see for instance Nicholson 1999, 61–63.
7 I use the translation by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (1997), with a few slight modifications.
8 These are not seen as exceptional events, but rather as natural, since the soul in general has a divinatory nature (μαντικόν γέ τι). This can explain why, already at the beginning of his speech, Socrates thinks that he experiences a divine influence (238c6: θεῖον πάθος πεπονθέναι).
9 This could be the moment when, as he confesses later on (242c), he divined that he had offended the gods.
10 See for instance *Apology* 40a4: ἡ γὰρ εἰωθυῖά μοι μαντικὴ ἡ τοῦ δαιμονίου.
11 On the divine sign, see Brisson 2005. On the reason why the *daimonion* is apotreptic, see for instance McPherran 2005, 25–27. On the *daimonion* as divination, see Addey 2014, 57.
12 See Bodéüs 1990.
13 There is a certain ambiguity concerning the intervention of the divine sign in the *Phaedrus*. In the *Apology*, Socrates says that the divine sign prevents him from doing wrong. Yet, in the *Phaedrus*, it seems as if Socrates has already done wrong through his first discourse which offends the gods, and that the divine sign did not stop him from doing this. This apparent contradiction seems to be cleared up when Socrates says that the first discourse was not his, but Phaedrus' discourse. And yet, at the end, he will speak about the whole discourse (with the first and the second discourses included) as being dialectical.
14 Another way in which Socrates links divination and divine madness has to do with the testimony of people of old. This testimony is in fact another type of divination, which Plato considers more trustworthy, because people of old were closer to the gods and were more able to receive the divine message and to have access to the truth (see *Phaedrus* 244b–d, 274c1–2 and 275b, as well as *Philebus* 16c). Plato uses what people of old said about divination

itself. He suggests that divination (μαντική) was originally the art of the divine madness (μανική) (244b4–c4). What is important in this passage is that Plato invokes the "men of old" (οἱ παλαιοί), opposing them to the men of these days. This shows that the link between divine madness and divination is not something that can be based on human knowledge, but rather on divination itself, as the art in which these "men of old" were more skilled.

15 For the idea that divination was imposed through a divine fate, see *Apology* 33c6.

16 249d: "the fourth kind of madness—that which someone shows when he sees the beauty we have down here and is reminded of true beauty; then he takes wing and flutters in his eagerness to rise up, but is unable to do so".

17 See also 255d3, when it is said that "the boy is in love, but has no idea what he loves".

18 See 266b3–5: "I am myself a lover of these divisions and collections, so that I may be able to think and to speak."

19 249c5–6: "his memory always keeps it as close as possible to those realities by being close to which the gods are divine" (πρὸς γὰρ ἐκείνοις ἀεί ἐστιν μνήμῃ κατὰ δύναμιν, πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὢν θεῖός ἐστιν).

20 See 249d2 (ἐνθουσιάζων) and 249c6–8: "A man who uses reminders of these things correctly is always at the highest, most perfect level of initiation (τελέους ἀεὶ τελετὰς τελούμενος)."

21 Werner 2011 suggests that philosophical madness (depicted in the palinode) is "a particular kind of *epistemic state*, in which the soul achieves a rapturous vision of the Forms" (48); this is a "*rational* kind" of madness (60), which is attained by dialectic (67), even though the author eventually considers that "the palinode is a 'playful' speech and we are meant to move beyond it," namely towards dialectic (66).

22 This is not the only circularity at work in the *Phaedrus*. Dorter 2006, 260 argues that "the structure of the dialogue is itself an illustration of the method that is being introduced," namely that of collection and division.

23 One has to "be able to cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints" and "see […] together things that are scattered about everywhere and collect […] them into one kind" (265d–e).

24 This mad opposition is precisely the feature that Socrates was looking for (265a5–6). It is the same madness of which the philosopher is accused (249d8: ὡς μανικῶς διακείμενος), but which, in fact, is a possession by the god (249d2: ἐνθουσιάζων).

25 The whole Socratic discourse is presented as a kind of reminiscence or as produced by reminiscence (250c7–8).

26 On this passage, see Schefer 2003, 175–177, where the relationship between rhetoric and initiation in the mysteries is discussed.

27 278b8–d1: "Now you go and tell Lysias that we came to the spring which is sacred to the Nymphs and heard words charging us to deliver a message to Lysias and anyone else who composes speeches". See also 279b1–2: "That is the message I will carry to my beloved, Isocrates, from the gods of this place".

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13 Plato on the Varieties of Knowledge

Justin Vlasits

Introduction: The Problem of the Unity of the *Philebus*

One of the major questions about Plato's late work on ethics, the *Philebus*, concerns its unity: how, if at all, does the methodology described early in the dialogue get applied in the discussions of the nature of pleasure and knowledge, and their respective role in the good life?[1] While this question has received significant attention when it comes to the discussion of pleasure,[2] there has been much less written about the method in the investigation of knowledge towards the end of the dialogue (55c–59d). At the start of the *Philebus*, Socrates outlines a method of inquiry that he calls a "gift of the gods." According to this method, one can obtain scientific knowledge about a given domain through division and collection, two classificatory procedures. Dorothea Frede and other commentators have been reluctant to say that the divine method of inquiry introduced at the beginning of the dialogue is applied here.[3] Frede outlines four reasons for this thesis:

1. There is no definition of knowledge in general.
2. The kinds of knowledge mentioned at the beginning of the dialogue have no place in the classification of 55c–59d.
3. There is no systematic enumeration of the kinds of knowledge.
4. The criterion for being a science in 55c–59d is based upon the presence of mathematics, not, as one would expect from the earlier exposition, on dialectic.

My aim is to give an account of the application of the divine method in this section of the dialogue that avoids Frede's objections and is able to make sense of the ranking of the kinds of knowledge.[4] Solving Frede's problems leads to new insights about the way that the inquisitive and educational aspects of knowledge relate to one another as well as the relationship between dialectic and other kinds of knowledge.

Section 2 gives an overview of the divine method of collection and division in the *Philebus*, as described in 16c–17a, and then sketches the

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role assigned to it in that context. In Section 3, I turn to the discussion of knowledge at 55c–59d and argue that there are significant textual reasons to think that Plato here refers back to the divine method. After giving my reading of the division of knowledge there, I argue that this interpretation can solve two of Frede's problems. Her two most fundamental worries, however, are that we never get an account of what *knowledge* is *as such* and of the role of dialectic in all forms of knowledge (1 and 4 in the above list). To answer this, in Section 4, I turn back to the divine method and argue that what unites all forms of knowledge is precisely the *method* by which we come to have such knowledge. Socrates claims that the gods "have left us this legacy of how to *inquire* and *learn* and *teach* one another" (16e). I suggest that this claim is meant to include inquisitive and educational aspects of all domains of knowledge. Socrates does not need to give an account of the unity of knowledge in the later discussion because he gave one earlier.

The Divine Method in Context

Socrates elaborates the divine method introduced in 16c–17a so that he and Protarchus, the primary interlocutor, will be able to compare pleasure and knowledge, which are the two main contenders for the human good. In this section I will briefly sketch the main context in which the method is introduced and the purpose it is presented as serving in the search for the human good and the ensuing contest between pleasure and knowledge for constituting the human good. Space does not permit a full discussion of these difficult and controversial sections.[5] I will focus only on the central methodological claims and how they are supposed to be applied in the rest of the dialogue.[6]

The starting point for our purposes is Socrates' opening salvo against Protarchus as he takes up Philebus' mantel to defend the hedonist position against Socrates at 12c1–13d1.[7] Socrates first suggests that there are pleasures of different kinds which are different from and opposed to one another. Protarchus initially balks at this, because "pleasure is most similar to pleasure" and pleasures only differ in terms of their source, not in their intrinsic natures. But Socrates counters this with the example of colors and shapes. Particular kinds of colors and shapes are said to be different and opposite to one another in themselves, so the fact that two things are both pleasures does not mean that they do not oppose one another. Socrates suggests that the only way to counter the argument put forward is to present in some way the kinds of pleasure and, since the same problem arises for his contender, knowledge, of this as well. The importance of having these classifications at hand is emphasized at a number of points throughout the early sections of the dialogue.

[T1] SOCRATES: Wasn't our argument at the beginning about knowledge and pleasure, which of them is to be chosen?
PHILEBUS: But of course.
SOCRATES: And we said each of them was one, at least.
PHILEBUS: Absolutely.
SOCRATES: The previous argument now demands this same thing of us: how is each of them one and many, and how aren't they straightaway indefinite, and what number does each of them have before each of them becomes indefinite?

(18e3–19a2)[8]

[T2] PROTARCHUS: For Socrates seems to me to ask whether or not there are kinds [*eidê*] of pleasure, and if so how many there are and what sort. And in exactly the same way we can ask him about knowledge.
SOCRATES: You speak most truly, son of Kallias. For if we were unable to do this for every one, both similar and the same and its opposite, as the present argument revealed, none of us would ever be worthy of anything at all.

(19b2–8)

[T3] PROTARCHUS: Now deliberate yourself about these things, whether you ought to divide the kinds of pleasure and knowledge, or else you ought to let them go, if somehow you were willing and able to clarify what we were debating now by some other means.

(20a5–8)

In all these passages, the idea is that if one is to hold that pleasure is the good, one is committed to dividing the kinds of pleasure, lest one run into the objection that Socrates set up at the outset. We need not be detained at the moment by the question whether the reasons that Socrates gives to enumerate the kinds of knowledge and pleasure are good reasons, since we will anyway soon have a major change in approach to the dialogue's main question. Instead, only note that the interlocutors think they need an accounting of the kinds of pleasure and knowledge respectively. Next we can turn to the method itself in 16c–17a. In the main passage describing the dialectical method as a gift of the gods, the basic idea is similar to many other passages (especially in late dialogues like the *Sophist* and *Statesman*): start with a kind and make successive distinctions within that kind. In the *Philebus* we get the further specification, not clearly made in the *Sophist*/*Statesman*, that one proceeds only until one reaches the lowest kinds, at which point one "lets each one of them all go into the infinite" (τὸ ἓν ἕκαστον τῶν πάντων εἰς τὸ ἄπειρον μεθέντα χαίρειν ἐᾶν, 16e1–2).

The methodological point of that passage is to argue that, to attain knowledge of a field of inquiry, one ought to enumerate a kind. In this way, one has a complete understanding of "how many" (16d6–7) the original one you divided comprises.

[T4] While the gods, just like I said, handed down to us this way of inquiring, learning, and teaching each other, the wise guys of today make a one in a chance way and a many faster and slower than they ought. After the one they go directly to the unlimited and flee the intermediates, which are what determines whether our speaking with each other is *dialectical* or *eristic*.

(16e–17a)[9]

Here Socrates articulates a *norm* of scientific division, marking the accounts that abide by the norm as dialectical and those that do not follow it as eristic.[10] However, it is quite unclear just what this norm is because he is stating it at such a high level of generality. To make it more comprehensible, he goes on to illustrate it with examples from the sciences of phonetics and music, particularly harmonic theory. In order to understand music, according to Socrates, you cannot simply know on the one hand sound and on the other that sounds are high, low, or equal. You have to know all the intervals and the ways they combine to be wise about music. These intervals are determinate relations of high and low that Plato sees as coming *between* sound in general and the *indeterminate* relation of being higher or lower.[11] There are a finite, determinate number of such intervals.[12] Thus, while it is not false to say that pitch admits of being higher and lower, acquiring musical knowledge requires more than that, because only knowing the intervals allows one to know harmonies which are constructed out of them.

Implicitly, this commits Socrates to the norm that every division must be exhaustive if one is to obtain scientific or craft knowledge on its basis. That is, one must know that nothing is left out of the division. If the division left something out, then too we would not know "how many" the original one was, since at least one of the "ones" would be missing from our count. This norm has the consequence that, whenever one fails to make an exhaustive division, one will end up speaking eristically, even if the inquirer was trying to divide exhaustively. But this seems to be precisely what T4 would expect us to say, since there the distinction between dialectical and eristic speech only depends on what the inquirer *does* (going to the unlimited before they enumerate all of the kinds) and not at all on what they *try* or *intend* to do.[13]

As we saw above, the explicit reason Socrates gives for introducing this methodology at this juncture in the conversation is that it will allow us to understand, for example, whether there are any essentially *bad* kinds

of pleasure or knowledge (18e–19a). In order to fulfill its purpose, then, the division of knowledge must similarly be exhaustive. If that does not happen, then we would not be able to make the necessary count of kinds of pleasure and knowledge.

To see this, we should take a closer look at the exhaustivity norm of division. The exhaustivity norm of division can be conceived of in two ways, extensionally and intensionally. A division of a kind *K* into subkinds $k_1 \ldots k_n$ is *extensionally* exhaustive just in case every individual of which *K* is predicated is predicated by at least one of $k_1 \ldots k_n$. A division of a kind *K* into subkinds $k_1 \ldots k_n$ is *intensionally* exhaustive just in case every subkind of *K* is covered by at least one of $k_1 \ldots k_n$, where it is possible for more than one of $k_1 \ldots k_n$ to jointly cover some subkind of *K*.[14] These two definitions are not equivalent. In the latter case, but not the former, a merely *possible* individual suffices to show that the division is not exhaustive. Plato, as we will see, is interested only in the relations between kinds—it is no objection to a division that one of the subkinds has no *actual* members. It would be of no use to object to his division of pitch to say that no one ever played a high C. Note that this is merely a *necessary* condition for dividing dialectically. I don't think that Plato ever took himself to have given sufficient conditions.[15] Perhaps this is because he thought there was an ineliminable role for intuition[16] or else, as Galen suggests, Plato just does not take himself to have found out all the answers:

> [T5] Aristotle and Plato thought it was such a major and difficult task to divide the genera accurately into the appropriate differentiae, just as Theophrastus did after them, and the other philosophers who tried to bring the method to completion, that it has not yet been successfully accomplished by those men.
>
> (*Method of Medicine* 26K, trans. Johnston & Horsely 2011)

I have sympathy for Galen's suggestion despite his assimilation of Plato to a broadly Aristotelian framework, but nothing in what follows hangs on this. All that I will appeal to is this necessary condition for dialectical division.

The motivation given by Socrates above for introducing the method of division was the observation that, apparently, pleasure and knowledge may be both one and many. However, after the introduction of the method and its explication, Protarchus finds the task of total enumeration daunting and asks if there is another way. The ensuing conversation leads to a new way of thinking about the role of the divine method and it is this context that will be most directly relevant to the division of knowledge. Socrates begins his reply by mentioning a dream, which aimed to provide a sort of short cut to resolving the disagreement between Socrates and Protarchus. Here the idea was to compare three lives: one which only had

pleasure, one which only had knowledge, and one which is a mixture of the two. If the life of only pleasure (or knowledge) were better than the life of only knowledge (or pleasure), then we would clearly rank pleasure (or knowledge) more highly. The victory of the mixed life, however, closes off such a tidy resolution.[17]

After this, Socrates and Protarchus aim to figure out whether pleasure or knowledge is more similar to and more responsible for the goodness of the mixed life, a project which occupies them for the rest of the dialogue, until they have achieved a ranking of goods in which knowledge as a whole is set above all pleasures, but in which some pleasures are to play a part in the good human life. The enumeration of kinds of pleasure and knowledge is also important for this project, as we can see from the transition between the discussions of pleasure and knowledge.

[T6] Socrates Let us not complete the entire investigation of pleasure, while we appear to have so much mercy for reason and knowledge. But if it has a crack anywhere, let us strike it all around well, so that perceiving whatever of these is most pure by nature, we should use the truest parts of these and of pleasure in the joint judgement.
(55c4–9)

Here too, Socrates is alluding to knowing the parts of pleasure and knowledge in order to settle the contest between them. But he does not simply want us to find the truest bits of each, but to "strike it all around well" to see if there is anything unsound anywhere. This strongly suggests that Socrates is interested not only in the best bits, but also in the worse ones to make a complete comparison between the two, since he will later be asking whether only the purest types of knowledge/pleasure will be included in the best life, or else whether the impure forms should be included. That means that, if he does what he sets out to do in the pages immediately following this programmatic statement, his enumeration should be exhaustive. Otherwise, he may have missed out either impure or pure bits. And indeed the reason for this will become clearer at the end of the dialogue (61d–64b), where Socrates and Protarchus choose *some* bits of pleasure for the mixture of the best life, but, in the case of knowledge, they decide they should "let all the sciences rush in" (62c7).[18]

The Division of Knowledge

Let us summarize our results. In order for either pleasure or knowledge to be seen to be the human good, we must have a synoptic grasp of it and its subkinds.[19] Thus, *if* one of them is to be demonstrated to be the human good, then its subkinds must be exhaustively enumerated. Before moving on, it is important to note that the standards of the divine method are extraordinarily high. Socrates himself says that it has often escaped him

and that it is extremely difficult to use (16b5–7, cf. *Phaedrus* 266b–c) and Protarchus himself seems quite aware of the difficulty of the task and reluctant to even make such an attempt (19c1–20a8). If someone really divided knowledge in the way required, this one would be wise about knowledge. Is *this* necessary for an adequate comparison of the value of pleasure and knowledge? It seems not. However, there are two reasons that one should nevertheless expect the division of knowledge to employ the method with something like the standards that Socrates sets out at the beginning. First, in that earlier section, Socrates makes the very strong claim that we wouldn't be *worth anything at all* without making such divisions in the way that he recommended. Secondly, Socrates also uses the stereotypical language associated with division in the passages.[20] We should expect Socrates to use the method insofar as it will be important for the comparison that he needs to make.[21]

I will begin with a brief exposition of the passage, before elaborating Frede's objections to the claim that division is being used in this passage.

[T7] SOCRATES: Now for us, I think, there is, on the one hand, a *craftsmanlike* [*dêmiourgikon*] part of scientific knowledge, and another part that *has to do with education and upbringing* [*peri paideian kai trophên*]. Don't you think?

PROTARCHUS: I do.

SOCRATES: Indeed let us look through the manual crafts [*cheirotechnais*] first, to see whether there is one part which pertains more to science than the others, and another less. Then we ought to judge which is most pure and which is less pure.

PROTARCHUS: That is necessary.

SOCRATES: Now must we divide each of the leading crafts apart from each of them [=the manual crafts]?

PROTARCHUS: What sorts and how?

SOCRATES: For instance, if one were to separate arithmetic, the art of measurement, and the art of weighing from all the other crafts, what would remain of each of them would be, so to speak, vulgar.

PROTARCHUS: Vulgar indeed.

SOCRATES: Afterwards conjecturing would remain, as well as training the senses by means of experience and practice, making use of their abilities to guess, which many people call craft when it has been worked out with care and bodily labor.

(55d1–56a1)

After this, Socrates distinguishes arts like playing instruments, medicine, farming, navigation, and military strategy from housebuilding and shipbuilding, which make use of tools of measurement (56b4–c2). This is explicitly described as dividing the crafts into two (56c2), of which the latter are said to be the most precise crafts. Then Socrates takes up

the "leading crafts" of arithmetic, measurement, and weighing. Socrates argues that these crafts ground the effectiveness of the building crafts, just as the sculptor Polyclitus claimed that "the good work comes to be little by little through many numbers" (DK 40B2). Socrates divides the leading crafts into popular and philosophical, with the philosophical ones dealing with unities that are absolutely identical to one another and the popular dealing with unequal units, such as cows and armies (56d–e). Finally, Socrates claims that dialectic, which is the same as *phronêsis* and *nous* (while the others have to do with mere *doxa*), is the science of science and the supreme craft dealing with what is always unchanging (57c–58a). What results is an ascending hierarchy of five kinds of knowledge based on their "purity":

1. The arts involving guesswork: Music, medicine, agriculture, navigation, and strategy. (55e5–56b2)
2. Building: house and shipbuilding. (56b4–c6)
3. Popular mathematics: counting armies and cows, where the units are of different sizes. (56d4–e1)
4. Philosophical mathematics: counting in which all the units are exactly the same. (56e1–3)[22]
5. Dialectic: cognition of what is forever unchanging. (57e6–58a6)

While dialectic is meant to be the purest and most true kind of knowledge, it is wrong to infer (with the possible exception of the arts involving guesswork) that Plato denies that the others are forms of knowledge at all. This is clear from the final ranking of goods, where dialectic, later identified as wisdom, is put on a different rank than the other arts and sciences (58a4). While Plato is seeking the purest forms of knowledge just as he had done for pleasure, the use of the divine method is still important, since without an exhaustive division, we will not know whether there is a purer science than the one identified.

Our question now is: does this amount to a division of knowledge in accordance with the divine method described at the outset of the dialogue? While I above gave some *prima facie* reasons to answer affirmatively, Dorothea Frede gives four reasons that what Socrates does is not to be understood as an application of the divine method:

1. We don't get a definition of knowledge as a whole, whereas the divine method requires that one "grasps the initial unity" before one divides.
2. There is no distinction between the different mental capacities that are announced at the beginning of the dialogue: *nous*, *phronêsis*, *epistêmê*, *alêthês doxa*, *mnêmê*, etc.
3. Socrates does not provide a systematic enumeration of the kinds of knowledge. Not every kind of knowledge finds a place in the initial

dichotomy and dialectic in particular seems to fall outside. After the initial dichotomy, there is no further attempt to subdivide according to the rules of dialectic.[23]

4. Being a science has nothing to do with using the strictures of the divine method of dialectic, but with the use of mathematics and conventional instruments of measurement.

(Frede 1997, 320–324)

First, I will show that a proper understanding of the initial division of knowledge allows us to answer Frede's objections 2 and 3. I will return to 1 and 4 in the next section.

In order to find an interpretation that makes sense of Plato's project and the text, we need a more nuanced understanding of the first distinction between craftsmanlike and educational "parts" of knowledge, which goes by so quickly that even a generally thorough commentator like J. C. B. Gosling makes no mention of it at all in his commentary, proceeding straight to the second set of distinctions. It is generally thought that the initial distinction divides knowledge based on two kinds of subject matter: craftsmanlike sciences are the meaner crafts, while *paideia* is more refined knowledge, something akin to what would later be included in the *artes liberales*. This reading is immediately attractive, since Plato is making some kind of distinction between less precise crafts like building on the one hand and more precise sciences like mathematics and dialectic on the other.[24]

However, once we suppose that, since there is no explicit mention in the text of a transition to the *paideia* branch,[25] Socrates is only dividing craftsmanlike knowledge, the motivation for this view collapses. This is because, without a transition, those "higher arts" would have to all be examples of craftsmanlike knowledge, contrary to the interpretation under consideration. Thus, we should look for a different way of understanding the distinction. Moreover, even if we are satisfied with postulating a "silent transition" between the two branches of the division, it is not at all clear that the procedure described even comes close to making good on the norm of division discussed above. For example, there seems to me no reason to think that all kinds of knowledge are either manual crafts or liberal arts. What about statesmanship (*Plt*. 258b3–8) or, a craft explicitly discussed in this passage, rhetoric? Even if it is a lowly craft, calling it "manual" in any ordinary sense does not seem especially plausible. Thus, it seems to fail the norm of exhaustivity. These problems suggest that, especially if we want to respond to Frede's objections, we must seek a different understanding of this distinction.[26]

Another common meaning of *paideia* is education, but how should we understand its contrast with craftsmanlike knowledge? The pair *paideia*/*trophê*, which we find here in the *Philebus*, is common in Plato and should immediately remind us of the discussion of educational

programs in the *Republic* and *Laws*, wherein we find most of its occurrences.[27] In these programs, education clearly has both a moral and an intellectual dimension.[28] In the *Philebus*, however, Socrates is less interested in the role that they play in the good city than in what they are and how they relate to knowledge. In the *Republic* and *Laws* passages there can be *paideia* of anything that can be learned. It is an institution in which children acquire the skills that they will need to play their role in the city, as citizens generally and in whatever occupation they eventually take up. The discussions of education in the *Republic*, for instance, are primarily concerned with the education of the guardians and so go into great detail concerning the subject matters most important for that job. In its most general sense, however, education is meant to instill pious and virtuous attitudes. It seems to me not at all clear that there is even a hint of the notion of "high culture" here. In addition to the fancy mathematics, it seems like it can include the content of stories told to young children. This is especially clear in the *Laws*, where it includes gymnastic arts like dancing and wrestling.[29]

Let us turn now to the other term in the purported division. While *dêmiourgikos* certainly does have some lower-class connotations, Plato's subversion of traditional expectations in regard to craftsmen extends well beyond his examination of knowledge here. In other words, he can subvert our expectations about who counts as a craftsman and the value of that without conflating it with another, traditionally more highly valued, kind of artist.[30] Instead, he could simply be *extending* the notion of productive science. *Dêmiourgikos* indeed, is usually in Plato opposed to "amateur" (*idiotês*) and means something very close to "professional". An "ergon" here doesn't mean some kind of external *product*, but more generally a task.[31] The clearest expression of this distinction comes in the *Protagoras* when Socrates asks Hippocrates what sort of teaching he is expecting from Protagoras:

> [T8] SOCRATES: For you didn't learn each of these [writing and kithara-playing] for the craft, as if you were going to a professional [*dêmiourgos*], but for education [*paideia*], as befits a layman and a free person. (*Prt.* 312b2–4)

The same idea is present in Protagoras' great speech (322a–d), where Protagoras explicitly makes the *dêmiourgikai* crafts the ones that are specialized, in contrast with justice, which is distributed equally.[32]

This understanding of *paideia* motivates a very different kind of distinction than what most readers have supposed. Instead of two kinds of knowledge that are distinguished on the basis of their subject matter, Socrates divides knowledge based on the kind of *activities* one engages in when one has knowledge of the subject matter. The craftsmanlike part of knowledge is the aspect of one's knowledge at issue when doing whatever

is characteristic of that craft: for housebuilding, building a house; for strategy, conducting a war; for geometry, proving a theorem. It is essentially *creative*. *Paideia* is the part of knowledge to do with *teaching* housebuilding, military strategy, and geometry.[33]

This leads me into a new proposal about how to think of Plato's procedure here. My inspiration comes from a brief passage in the *Statesman*, where the Eleatic visitor is trying to distinguish the job of the statesman from those crafts "most like it" by distinguishing the kind of authority a practitioner of the craft has over that of the statesman in directing the education of that craft:

[T9] Isn't there a kind of teaching for us of music and generally of all the other kinds of knowledge concerning handicrafts?

(*Statesman* 304b)

If we take *mathêsis* as characterizing the activity of the learner when she is receiving *paideia kai trophê* in **T7**, we can understand Plato as saying here that, in addition to the production of musical sound, the science of music also involves teaching.[34]

Now we can give an interpretation of the passage that reconciles the above desiderata by appealing to parallels in the *Gorgias* and *Sophist*. In those dialogues, Plato several times makes use of "doubling" divisions that cross-cut each other. For example, in *Sophist* 266a1–11, he divides the productive art lengthwise and breadthwise. This is better represented by a matrix than a Porphyrian tree: [35]

Table 13.1 Division of Production

Production	*Divine (Production)*	*Human (Production)*
(Production) of copies	Divine production of copies	Human production of copies
(Production) of originals	Divine production of originals	Human production of originals

Similarly, in the *Gorgias* (464b–6a) he divides "caring" two-dimensionally:

Table 13.2 Division of Caring

Caring	*Soul (Caring)*	*Body (Caring)*
(Caring) by correcting	Justice	Medicine
(Caring) by instilling	Legislation	Gymnastics

and again, when he divides flattery:

Table 13.3 Division of Flattery

Flattery	*Soul (Flattery)*	*Body (Flattery)*
(Flattery) by correcting	Rhetoric	Pastry-Baking
(Flattery) by instilling	Sophistry	Cosmetics

On the proposed interpretation, education is divided into exactly as many kinds as craftsmanlike knowledge, the latter being the actual practice of the skill and the former the instruction that one needs in order to obtain it. Thus, for example, we have the science of building ships alongside the science of teaching someone how to build ships. The product of all of these is not clear. What, for example, does an arithmetician produce? Perhaps, like a geometer they produce constructions, in some sense of produce. Even more mysterious is what the dialectician produces: *logoi*? In any case, it seems to me to be necessary that we not construe the *ergon* in an overly narrow way, as only describing external products that lie outside of the doing of the craft. Rather, just as Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that some *erga* are in the action itself (*EN* I.7), we should not be afraid of making the same claim for Plato. Instead of understanding the *ergon* of a craft or science as an external product, it is better to understand it as what it is oriented towards accomplishing. For lack of a better term, I call this the "creative" aspect of that craft or science.

We can summarize the interpretation proposed in the following table:

Table 13.4 Division of Knowledge

Knowledge	*Creative (Knowledge)*	*Educational (Knowledge)*
Guesswork	Creative part of Guesswork	Educational part of Guesswork
Building	Creative part of Building	&c
Common mathematics		
Philosophical mathematics		
Dialectic		

Now that we have this general representation, we can inquire about the principles that lie behind the division. The division between creation and education is fundamentally between what you might call the constitutive task of a craft, and the educative role. The fivefold division is based on the notion of measurement: the crafts of guesswork make little to no use of it, whereas the tectonic crafts make extensive use of it. Common mathematics is the study of measurement itself as applied to sensible objects. Philosophical mathematics is the same, but considering ideal units. And, as Jessica Moss argues, dialectic in the dialogue takes limit itself as its object of study.[36]

Further, we can see how the degrees of purity for the two aspects of a single art should line up. Just as music is less pure than carpentry, so too the education of music is less pure than the education of carpentry.[37] And this makes sense because Plato articulates purity on the basis of the subject matter, which will be in common between the creative and educational parts of any particular science. Moreover, we know exactly how many kinds of knowledge there are: ten.[38] This is guaranteed by the spectrum of purity used in connection with the divine method. Since all the kinds were placed along this spectrum and the enumeration went in the direction of greater purity, we know we have hit them all in the same way that we know we have hit all the notes when we play a glissando up an octave.

This reading, I suggest, responds to Frede's problem 3: dialectic has a place and there is significant subdivision. Moreover, it is exhaustive: crafts either use measurement tools or not, or else are "leading" crafts (which seem to be precisely the crafts of counting, measuring, and weighing). These in turn either use equal units or do not.[39] We can also address Frede's problem 2: the forms of cognition that Socrates has mentioned at the outset are present in this division. *Doxa*, *phronêsis*, and *nous* are all explicitly mentioned in the passage. The latter two are identified with dialectic and the former covers all other sciences, which deal with things subject to change. Moreover, given the analysis of *doxa* that came earlier in the dialogue, Socrates has also given an account of memory as a retained perception. This in turn is a necessary condition for a soul to have *doxa* (39a). Memory thus appears implicitly in the passage, although not itself as a kind of knowledge and therefore not included in the final accounting of the good life. So, *pace* Frede, Socrates never forgets about his original list of candidates, even if they now appear in a somewhat unexpected way. Finally, we can see how this interpretation has Socrates more or less doing what he says he is going to do in the gift of the gods passage. It seems to me that we arrive pretty clearly at a "number" for knowledge: 2 times 5 = 10 subkinds.

Conclusion: Back to the Gift of the Gods

In arguing that the division of knowledge is a "cross-cutting" division, I have shown how we can read it as an application of the divine method. But we might wonder how these subkinds of knowledge are unified. This is Frede's problem 1. What characterizes knowledge *as such*?

Here too, the gift of the gods gives us guidance. For the gods "have left us this legacy of how to *inquire* and *learn* and *teach* one another" (16e3–4). This method, according to Socrates, constitutes both the *creative* and the *educational* aspects of any domain of knowledge. Theuth was able to discover the letters in order to become the inventor of writing, but he

taught writing to humankind. In fact, this is exactly how Socrates introduces the examples of music and phonology to Protarchus:

[T10] SOCRATES: But what I meant will be clear, Protarchus, in the case of the letters, and so consider it in those things in which you have been *educated*.

(17a8–b1)

This is a subtle way of pointing out that the method of a first discoverer like Theuth is exactly the same method as one who teaches or learns by teaching. One might worry that the way Theuth discovers the art of writing must be quite different from how he teaches it, since he does the former with collection and the latter with division.[40] Plato, however, never separates these two procedures in this way, preferring to talk of one *hodos* that does both. This is illustrated by Theuth's own procedure, which crucially involves both collection and division (18c3–d2). Moreover, Socrates only discusses *one* legacy handed down to us, which is supposed to allow us to do all these things. This is why, although inquiring into letters is not identical to teaching them to others, they might necessarily come from the same capacity. In both cases, one has the method, but the way in which the method is applied is different. So, while it is important to recognize the distinction within any given art between creation and education for the purposes of completely enumerating the domain of knowledge, it is equally important to recognize their unity through the unity of the method. Moreover, dialectic *itself* has this very same structure. It was discovered by the gods and handed down to us, plausibly by the very same method.[41] On the suggestion that I am presenting here, the divine method is used to some extent in inquiry and education in any sort of knowledge. However, the more measured, uniform, and stable the subject matter of the science is, the more perfectly the divine method can be applied and the purer the resulting knowledge is.[42] In this way, dialectic turns out to be both an ideal realized only in the study of unchanging being and paradigm for knowledge as a whole.

From this, it is clear why it is important for Socrates to have made the distinction between craftsmanlike and educational parts of knowledge. If he is to make a complete enumeration of knowledge, Socrates must recognize the fact that, for a given subject matter, there are different things a knower can do. They can 1) engage in the creative *per se* activity of that subject matter: designing or building a house, proving a theorem, etc. or 2) transmit their knowledge to others by teaching. This is of philosophical significance because it connects with the deeply Socratic intuition that all and only knowledge is teachable (*Meno* 87b–c).[43] For example, X is known by an agent if and only if it can be taught. This Socratic view is in a way directly reflected in the interpretation provided here. First, every

subject matter that can be known can also be taught—this is a direct result of the cross-cutting division. Second, the unity of method shows why, even though the educational and creative parts of knowledge are distinct, an agent cannot possess one without the other. This is because one uses the same method for both: the gift of the gods.

We can finally address Frede's problem 4: Socrates emphasizes mathematics, not dialectic, in the passage because he has already said how mathematics is effective, namely through dialectic. Dialectic is thus used in mathematics in the same way that building uses mathematics. This point is also suggested early on in the dialogue:

[T11] SOCRATES: It is not difficult to indicate the method, but it is extremely difficult to use it. For everything which has been discovered having craft in any way has come to be clear through it.

(16c1–3)

Indeed, Socrates seems to think that early music theorists made us understand that "one must inquire about every one and many in this way" (17d6–7). Thus, far from Frede's worry that dialectic plays no role at all in the division of knowledge, Socrates can consistently maintain that all science is ultimately due to dialectic. In the division, he emphasizes dialectic as the purest kind of knowledge and does not directly emphasize how it unifies knowledge. On the other hand, just as the purest forms of pleasure have no pain mixed in, we expect that the purest form of knowledge is likewise unmixed with ignorance. In the tectonic crafts, mathematics was responsible for the precision that it has (and therefore its status as knowledge at all). Dialectic is supreme in its precision, truth, and reliability. Moreover, the divine method itself shows us how dialectic's precision can do for mathematics what mathematics does for the building crafts. In this way, dialectic has a double function: it is the science of sciences because it makes any instance of science a science, and, further, it is the science of unchanging beings. This is not in tension, since the sense in which it is science of sciences is *not* that it has science as its *object*. Rather, it is science of science because its methodology is the ultimate ground for all science.

In conclusion, I've argued that the divine method described early in the *Philebus* finds a fitting application in the examination of knowledge itself and that comparison of those two passages not only shows what Plato thinks the varieties of knowledge are, but also how knowledge itself is a unified kind.

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Notes

1 See Gosling 1975, ix; Kelsey & Lear 2019.
2 See Fletcher 2017 for the most promising proposal concerning the use of the divine method in the pleasure section. See also De Chiara-Quenzer 1993; Carpenter 2015; Ionescu 2007 on the unity of methodological sections and other parts of the dialogue. The most extensive general discussions of the relation between the methodological sections and the investigation of knowledge are Gadamer 1931; Davidson 1990; Frede 1997; and Delcomminette 2006.
3 Besides Frede, skeptics about the applicability of the method of collection and division in this passage include R. Hackforth (1958, ad loc.) and Kelsey and Lear (2019), but I focus on Frede as she objects most clearly to its application in this passage. Recent contributions to the literature on 55c–59d do not touch on issues about classification in detail: Harvey 2012; Carpenter 2015; Harte 2018; Moss 2019.
4 In particular, I will only discuss the *ranking* of the kinds of knowledge insofar as it relates to the method of division. For discussion see Harvey 2012; Carpenter 2015; Moss 2019. The other aspect of the section that has seen significant attention is a textual issue at 56a, on which see Barker 1987.
5 On which, see Crivelli 2019, which also contains an up-to-date bibliography.
6 In particular, I leave aside the difficulties with Socrates' examples as well as the metaphysics that lie behind the methodology. On the latter, see Striker 1970; Meinwald 1998; Harte 2002; Gill 2012; Crivelli 2019.
7 For an expansive discussion of the opening sections of the dialogue and its context in the Platonic corpus, see Vogt 2019.
8 For the Greek text, I follow the OCT. All translations of Plato are my own.
9 Compare this passage with *R.* 454a, on which, see Vasilis Politis' contribution to this volume.
10 For a more thorough treatment of Plato on the norms of division, see Vlasits (forthcoming-a).
11 Here I follow the general trend in the literature not to read the unlimited as being some indeterminate/infinite number of particulars. See Barker 2011 for discussion of the musical example and Galen *MM* 24K ff. for an elaboration of the division of Letter. As Menn (1998) points out, Plato uses the Theuth passage in the *Philebus* to illustrate collection, but there is a suggestion in 17b that Theuth could also have used division to accomplish the same end of coming to know the letters.
12 The harmonies that are constituted out of them are also finite and made up of determinate intervals stacked on top of one another.
13 Plato discusses another way of knowing the complete number, by ascending from the indeterminate to the one (18a6–b4), generally called collection in the literature. It is somewhat unusual that in the *Philebus* he considers these two procedures rather separately, whereas elsewhere (such as in the *Phaedrus* 265d–e), they are treated as a single methodological unit. However, this is not as great a difference as it may initially seem. When Socrates goes on to describe what Theuth actually does, it is clear that he employs collection in combination with division (18b6–d2). When Socrates describes the procedures as

separate, he is only considering the general path of inquiry: from the many/unlimited to the one (collection) or the one to the many/unlimited (division). That does not prevent both procedures from being employed within that general direction (Henry 2011).

14 I put it this way so that exhaustivity is kept independent of a strong form of exclusivity. If we have exhaustivity without exclusivity, two or more kinds together will cover a single kind. For example, dividing numbers into odd numbers, composite numbers, and 2, since every number is one of these, but some numbers are both odd and composite. Extensional exclusivity would require that every individual falls into no more than one subkind and in the intensional case that every subkind of *K* is covered by no more than one of $k_1 \ldots k_n$. Putting together the respective forms of exclusivity and exhaustivity imply that there is exactly one of $k_1 \ldots k_n$ for each subkind (intentional) or individual (extensional) of *K*.

15 There are other necessary conditions alluded to in this passage: the norms of not skipping steps and dividing into as small a number as possible. As far as I can tell, these do not play a major role in the division of knowledge. For discussion of these norms, see Vlasits (forthcoming-a).

16 See Henry 2011 for a recent defense of this view.

17 See Harte 2014 for a different route to the same conclusion.

18 This is not to say that every kind of cognitive activity will be included, for instance day-dreaming. See Vogt 2010 and Cooper 1977. Such cognitive activities are not a part of the division of knowledge. Nevertheless, I will argue below that, in the course of his discussion, Socrates in fact gives an account of every kind of cognitive activity that he mentions at the outset of the dialogue.

19 On some readings, the considered view of the *Philebus* is that pleasure does not have subkinds because it is not a sufficiently unified genus (Vogt 2010; Fletcher 2017). In this chapter, I am not taking a stand on this issue, as it is not relevant to the division of knowledge, which *is* a unified genus.

20 The partitive *men/de* at 56d1–2, 56c5–6, and 56d4–5, *dialepteon* 56d10, *chôrizê* 55e1, *dichê* 56c4, *dittas* 56d1, *diorismenos* 56d7, *horos* 56d9, *duo tithômen* 57a2–4.

21 In this respect, the examination of pleasure proceeds somewhat differently, although space does not permit a fuller discussion. See Fletcher 2017 for the approach closest to my own.

22 Should we understand 3 and 4 as falling under the same genus: mathematics? I take it that the fact that Socrates insists that these two arts only happen to share "one name" leads us to think that there is nothing essential in common between them, even if on some level popular mathematics presupposes or points to philosophical mathematics (see Klein 1968). Cf. *Statesman* 262d–e.

23 Frede argues that, because the five-fold division/ranking cuts across the initial dichotomy, it isn't dialectically sound. I will show below that cross-cutting divisions are not uncommon in Plato's diairetical practice.

24 See the diagrams in Hackforth 1958, ad loc.; Frede 1997, 322; or De Chiara-Quenzer 1993 for examples of such readings.

25 This fact is widely noted among commentators since Hackforth 1958, but as far as I know, only Verity Harte (2018) takes the issue at all seriously. Harte's idea is that Socrates makes the distinction only to discard it because it is irrelevant. But if it is irrelevant, why not say so and explicitly go in another direction? Indeed, if it is irrelevant, we should wonder what the point was of introducing it at all.

26 Two non-standard ways to understand the distinction avoid these problems. Moss 2019 suggests that the division is between useful and useless types of

knowledge. This is plausibly exclusive. However, as will be argued below, *dêmiourgikos* is not limited to what is useful, since in Plato it includes, for instance, arithmetic. Further, education frequently deals both with what is useful (writing) and useless (perhaps mathematics). Christopher Bobonich in discussion raised the possible connection between this division and the one at *Statesman* 258d ff. A difficulty for this reading comes when we ask where the craft of building goes. In the *Statesman*, the manual laborer is said to have practical knowledge, but the master builder has theoretical knowledge. This distinction, however, is absent in the *Philebus*, and building must be placed as a whole in one slot on this interpretation. But either way one does this, one will leave out the other kind of building and not have an exhaustive division.

27 E.g., *Republic* 414d, 423e, 424a, 430a, 455e, 552e, 534d, *Laws* 643c, 695c, 783b, 795d, 854e, 926e, 874d. Cf. Astius 1835, sv *paideia* et *trophê*. Compare also *Sophist* 229d: *paideia* as teaching of crafts; *Statesman* 304b on learning.

28 See *Laws* 817e–818b, 966d–967a. This is also true in *Republic* II–III (see especially 411 ff), where athletics and music are two ingredients in the education of the guardians.

29 See *Laws* 814c–5a.

30 The divine craftsman of the *Timaeus* and *Nous* earlier in the *Philebus* spring to mind as obvious examples.

31 Compare with *Gorgias* 452a: a *dêmiourgos* is just a professional, includes any practitioner of any craft, including mathematics; *Gorgias* 455b: *dêmiourgos* includes both master craftsman and workers, here explicitly wider than *cheirotechnia*; *Gorgias* 453e: the arithmetician is a *dêmiourgos* of persuasion; *Euthydemus* 2nd protreptic 290 ff: all crafts plausibly have *erga* (302c).

32 Compare *Ion* 532c where a *dêmiourgos* is also contrasted with a layperson.

33 Doesn't education require something extra, though, such as thinking about the student's psychology? While this might be the case for *rhetoric* (especially in the *Phaedrus*), in *Gorgias* 453e–454a, Socrates' argument against Gorgias crucially depends on the arithmetician being the proper teacher concerning number, giving no hint that there is anything else to his knowledge about psychology. Thanks to George Rudebusch for pointing out the relevance of this passage.

34 Compare with *Clitophon* 409b, where it is said that the craft of medicine constitutively involves making new doctors.

35 For further discussion of these divisions, see Vlasits (forthcoming-b).

36 Moss 2019. It is out of the scope of this chapter to give a full account of this ranking. However, from what we have gleaned about the division, we can see that Socrates infers whether kinds of knowledge are truer or purer on the basis of their use of measurement. On the ranking, Amber Carpenter (2015) makes the important point that knowledge functions as a paradigm. Moss (2019) argues for the unity of the discussions of the divine method and dialectic as it is discussed in the 55–59 passage.

37 Should education in the baser arts be *purer* than the actual practice? All that I want Socrates to be committed to is that the degree of purity of pure mathematics education is higher than that of education in applied mathematics. The question how the educational aspect of arts is related to the productive aspect does not get raised directly in the dialogue, so it will be a matter of speculation. I can see some reason for saying that education would be purer but I can also see some reason to think that they have to line up. If someone is going to learn how to be an aulos or kithara player, they had better learn more than Pythagorean music theory, since that will not give them any proficiency with how to move their fingers, blow/pluck in the right way to make pleasing and pure notes. In teaching common arithmetic, one has to learn

that the difference in sizes of units does not matter in order to be an effective counter of armies.

38 What about further subkinds? It seems to me that it is not relevant to the argument of the dialogue, since Socrates and Protarchus are able to evaluate the role of these in the good life. However, the same point cannot be made about exhaustivity, since missing kinds of knowledge *would* be a big problem for Socrates' argument.

39 It satisfies the definition of exhaustivity given above because creative and educational parts jointly cover (e.g.) philosophical mathematics. It does, however, fail the intuitive definition of exclusivity given in note 14, since creative philosophical arithmetic falls under creative and philosophical arithmetic, neither of which contains the other.

40 Thanks to Marc Gasser-Wingate for pressing this objection.

41 It might be worried that the way one *inquires* in a craft can be fundamentally different from the creative activity of the craft. Consider housebuilding: is it really plausible that when we lay bricks we are "inquiring"? I would suggest here that Plato has in mind not the menial laborer (*banausos*), but the person with the brains behind the operation: the architect or engineer. For them, it is plausible that their creative act can simultaneously be described as inquiring. Indeed, in *Statesman* 299b ff, the Stranger suggests that inquiring into one's craft is constitutive of practicing that craft and that written rules prescribing how one ought to perform that craft which prevented further inquiry would destroy that craft.

42 See Harte 2018 on the relationship between the nature of the subject matter and the kind of knowledge that can be had of it.

43 Bjelde 2021.

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